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Prabuddha Bharata

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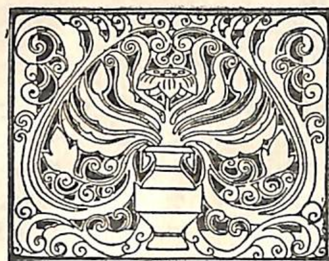
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Prabuddha Bharata

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Arise! Awake! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA REMINISCES

'What can a man achieve through mere scholarship? What is needed is prayer and spiritual discipline. Gauri of Indesh was both a scholar and a devotee. He was a worshipper of the Divine Mother. Now and then he would be overpowered with spiritual fervour. When he chanted a hymn to the Mother, the pundits would seem like earth-worms beside him. I too would be overcome with ecstasy.

'At first he was a bigoted worshipper of Sakti. He used to pick up tulsi-leaves[1] with a couple of sticks, so as not to touch them with his fingers. Then he went home. When he came back he didn't behave that way any more. He gave remarkable interpretations of Hindu mythology. He would say that the ten heads of Ravana represented the ten organs. Kumbhakarna was the symbol of tamas, Ravana of rajas, and Vibhishana of sattva. That was why Vibhishana obtained favour with Rama.'

*

[The Master said that Pandit Gauri had a miraculous power acquired through his austerities. Whenever he was invited to a scriptural controversy, he used to utter loudly a few times the line, 'Whom else shall I, helpless one, have for a refuge, but Thee, O Mother of the pot-bellied Ganesh,' preceded by the syllables 'ha, re, re, re,' evoking heroic sentiment, before entering the house and the place of the meeting.] 'The hearts of all were startled with an indescribable fright when they heard from his mouth those syllables, expressive of the heroic mood, and that quarter of a stanza from the hymn to the Devi by the Acharya Sankara uttered in a voice deep and sonorous like the rumbling cf a cloud. Two results were achieved by this. Firstly, by virtue of that sound, the power in Gauri became fully awakened; and, secondly, he stole away the strength of the adversaries by startling and charming them with it. Loudly uttering that sound and slapping his left arm, like wrestlers, with the palm of his right, Gauri entered the meeting and sat down with his legs folded and

[1] These leaves are sacred to Vishnu. The bigoted worshipper of Sakti hates everything associated with Vishnu, and *vice versa*.

his knees joined together in front and the feet behind, in the fashion of the courtiers of the emperors of Delhi, and engaged himself in the controversy.'

*

'The divine Mother afterwards told me that the power with which Gauri stole away the powers of others, himself remaining unconquerable, was exposed here and lost to him for ever. Mother attracted that power "here" (into the Master) for his good.'

*

'Now and then I think, "What is it I know that makes so many people come to me?" Vaishnavcharan was a great pundit. He used to say to me: "I can find in the scriptures all the things you talk about. But do you know why I come to you? I come to hear them from your mouth."'

*

'Vaishnavcharan used to say that one has attained Perfect Knowledge if one believes in God sporting as man. I wouldn't admit it then. But now I realize that he was right. Vaishnavcharan liked pictures of man expressing tenderness and love.'

*

'Gauri once said that one attains true Knowledge when one realizes the identity of Kali and Gauranga.[2] That which is Brahman is also Sakti, Kali. It is That, again, which, assuming the human form, has become, Gauranga.'

*

'Vaishnavcharan said to me, "If a person looks on his beloved as his Istha, he finds it very easy to direct his mind to God." The men and women of a particular sect[3] at Syambazar, near Kamarpukur, say to each other, "Whom do you love?" "I love so-and-so." "Then know him to be your God." When I heard this, I said to them: "That is not my way. I look on all women as my mother." I found out that they talked big but led immoral lives. The women then asked me if they would have salvation. "Yes," I said, "if you are absolutely faithful to one man and look on him as your God. But you cannot be liberated if you live with five men."'[4]

---

[2] An uncompromising hostility exists between the devotees of Kali and the devotees of Gauranga.

[3] The reference is to certain minor sects of Vaishnavism, such as the Kartabhaja and the Navarasika, which teach that men and women should live together in the relationship of love. Gradually they should idealize their love by looking upon each other as divine, eventually realizing that their physical love is also the love of God. This is very difficult to realize.

[4] 'While he was teaching that one should have reverence for and devotion to the object of one's love, as God, the Master sometimes quoted Vaishnavcharan on that subject and said, "Vaishnavcharan used to say that if any one could look upon the object of his love as his chosen Ideal, his mind would soon turn to the divine Lord." Saying so, he would forthwith explain it: "He used to advise the women of his own community to do so. It was therefore not blameworthy; for have they not got the mental attitude of a paramour? They wanted to attribute to themselves that attraction for God which a woman feels in her mind for her paramour."' (Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master*, pp. 518-9)

ONWARD FOR EVER!

The body has in itself a certain power of curing itself and many things can rouse this curative power into action, such as mental conditions, or medicine, or exercise, etc. As long as we are disturbed by physical conditions, so long we need the help of physical agencies. Not until we have got rid of bondage to the nerves, can we disregard them.

There is the unconscious mind, but it is below consciousness, which is just one part of the human organism. Philosophy is guess-work about the mind. Religion is based upon sense contact, upon seeing, the only basis of knowledge. What comes in contact with the superconscious mind is fact. Aptas are those who have 'sensed' religion. The proof is that if you follow their method, you too will see. Each science requires its own particular method and instruments. An astronomer cannot show you the rings of Saturn by the aid of all the pots and pans in the kitchen. He needs a telescope. So, to see the great facts of religion, the method of those who have already seen must be followed.... Before we came into the world God provided the means to get out; so all we have to do is to find the means. But do not fight over methods. Look only for realization and choose the best method you can find to suit you. Eat the mangoes and let the rest quarrel over the basket. See Christ, then you will be a Christian. All else is talk; the less talking the better.

Vivekananda

TWO GREAT SCRIPTURES—THE *GĪTĀ* AND THE *CAṆḌĪ*

EDITORIAL

Of the many holy books from which thousands of Hindus daily recite, the *Gītā* and the *Caṇḍī*—also called the *Durgā-saptaśatī* or *Devīmāhātmyam*—are the most popular. Though their themes and their methods of treatment seem to differ greatly from each other, and their popularity too is owing to apparently diverse causes, still, philosophically speaking, both of them are profound and have many features in common. The profundity is evidenced by the large number of commentaries available on both of them. Significantly, both are traditionally believed to have been composed by Vyāsa, the great sage of cyclopaedic Vedic wisdom. While the *Gītā* forms the eighteen chapters from twenty-fifth through forty-second of the 'Bhīṣmaparvan' of the *Mahābhārata*, the *Caṇḍī* constitutes the thirteen chapters from eighty-first through ninety-third of the *Mārkaṇḍeya-purāṇa*. The number of verses in the *Gītā* clearly adds up to 700; but the *Caṇḍī*—though called 'the 700 mantras on Durgā'—has only 578 verses. Still, some of the commentators, as for instance Bhāskararāya Makhi, have convincingly explained the divisions and numbering in the text of the *Caṇḍī* to bring up the number of mantras to 700. Both of the books are presented in dialogic form: the *Gītā* being a dialogue between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, and the *Caṇḍī*, between the sage Medhas and his two enquirers, King Suratha and the merchant Samādhi. The highly symbolic setting of warfare figures largely in both the books.

BACKGROUNDS

As the *Gītā* opens, we find the two huge armies of the opposing Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas arrayed against each other and the zero hour, for the showdown, drawing near. Arjuna's chariot, with a magnificent

team of white steeds and driven by Śrī Kṛṣṇa—no other than God Himself—is stationed in the no-man's land between the armies for enabling Arjuna to survey the warriors ranged on both sides. It is at this juncture that a terrible mental conflict seizes him—whether as a kṣatriya warrior he should fight a bloody war, necessarily killing his kith and kin, to win a kingdom, or forsake worldly ambitions and take up the peaceful vocation of a mendicant monk. He at first argues with Kṛṣṇa, apparently quite logically, in favour of the second course. He meets with a biting rebuke from the Lord for his 'lowness of spirit' and 'base faint-heartedness'. But even that does not seem to shake Arjuna out of his despondency; and he miserably pleads with the Lord again. At this point his inner conflict had taken such a severe turn that —warrior of unrivalled valour though he was—he confesses to being 'overpowered in the very essence of my being by this evil of commiseration', to 'confusion about dharma', and to a 'grief that is drying up my very senses'. At the same time, he humbles himself before the Lord, praying: 'I am Your disciple. Instruct me, who have taken refuge in You.' From then on follows Śrī Kṛṣṇa's instruction which forms almost all the rest of the *Gītā*, as a result of which Arjuna's conflicts and confusion are resolved and he becomes firm in his determination to fight the war.

A similar psychological ferment characterizes the two enquirers Suratha and Samādhi in the opening scene of the *Caṇḍī*. Suratha, a noble dutiful king, was on the one hand defeated by a powerful enemy, and on the other outwitted by a palace conspiracy in which his erstwhile ministers were involved. He therefore rode on horseback out into the forest, on pretext of making a hunting-trip, and there wandering, discovered the serene hermitage of the sage Medhas. While helplessly brooding over his former glory, family and retinue in a fit of sadness, he met Samādhi, a merchant, who had also resorted to that forest deprived of his wealth and possessions by his own wicked wife and sons. Each wanted to forget his calamitous fate but was utterly unable to do so. Thus they decided to go to the sage and seek his counsel. In phrases strikingly similar to Arjuna's appeal to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Suratha said to Medhas:

> 'I wish to ask you one thing. Be pleased to reply to it. Without the control of my intellect, my mind is afflicted with sorrow. Though I have lost the kingdom, like an ignorant man —although I know it—I have an attachment to all the paraphernalia of my kingdom. How is this? And this merchant has been disowned by his sons, wife and servants; still he is inordinately affectionate towards them. Thus both he and I, drawn by attachment towards objects whose defects we do know, are exceedingly unhappy. How does this happen—that though we are aware of it, this delusion comes? This delusion besets me as well as him, blinded as we are in respect of discrimination.'

The sage in answer tells them about the Divine Mother's being the cause of this delusion and delineates Her glories and valiant martial exploits. Finally, both Suratha and Samādhi propitiate Her through worship, penance and surrender, and achieve their respective desired ends.

To be sure, the backgrounds of war in both the holy texts have a symbolic—as well as realistic—significance; again, the moods of despondency and grief in the enquirers typify those which most spiritual aspirants have to encounter. The war in the *Gītā*, as many have suggested, can symbolize man's inner conflicts between the forces of good and of evil. In the *Caṇḍī* too, the terrific wars that the Mother fights in conquering the demons and their hosts, represent the inner battles a sincere aspirant

has to fight against evil thoughts and passions, and in which the Mother's grace and strength help him to triumph. Spiritual awakening is generally preceded by a great psychological ferment, characterized by a paralyzing grief and helpless despondency, in which a person, finding his human resources utterly inadequate, turns for light and strength to the Divine. It is only at such 'extremity' of man that God finds His 'opportunity' to rescue him from misery and ignorance. The situational framework in both the *Gītā* and *Caṇḍī*, thus emphasize in realistic imagery the beginning, progress, and culmination of man's spiritual quest.

Philosophical Bases: Transcendence-immanence; Problem of Evil

The *Gītā*, most notably, presents all the important ideas of the Upaniṣads in a unified way and in easily understandable language. It also makes its own contributions in emphasizing the personal aspect of God and devotion to Him, in advocating the gospel of selfless and dedicated action, and in inculcating a spirit of religious harmony. Metaphysically, the *Gītā* is in perfect consonance with the Upaniṣads. The traditional metaphor which compares the latter to cows and the *Gītā* to their milk, is thus very appropriate. The universe, the Upaniṣads say, comes into being in Brahman, is sustained by It, and finally re-enters into It. Their basic assertion is that Brahman is the efficient cause as well as the material cause of the phenomenal universe. Permeating and controlling everything in creation in Its conditioned aspect, Brahman yet remains transcendental and infinite in Its unconditioned aspect. The *Gītā* accepts *in toto* this twofold aspect of the ultimate Reality, but tends to shift the emphasis from the impersonal and transcendent to the personal and immanent.

In the unmanifested form, the Lord pervades everything in the universe which in both its individual and cosmic aspects has been brought into being by the Lord's own power or *prakṛti* or māyā. *'Prakṛti'*, says Kṛṣṇa, 'under My guidance, gives birth to all things, moving and unmoving; and because of this, O Arjuna, the world revolves.'[1] This is made even more clear in other places in the *Gītā*. For instance, the Lord speaks of His twofold *prakṛti*, lower and higher—the former evolving and manifesting as the universe and its individual beings, and the latter being 'the Indwelling Spirit by which the universe is sustained'.[2] He is therefore the origin of the entire universe and also its dissolution. 'All is strung on Me', He says, 'as a row of gems on a thread.' He is in the heavens, in the sun, moon, stars and galaxies; He is in the earth, in trees and plants, mountains and rivers, in lakes and oceans. He indwells all beings. He is the radiance of the sun and moon, the sound in ether and savour of waters, the sweet fragrance in earth and brightness in fire. He is intelligence, wisdom, forgiveness, truthfulness, contentment, austerity, glory, fortune, memory, constancy, forbearance, manliness and daring in human beings. He is life itself in all beings.[3] The Lord Himself declares further:

> 'I am the Father of this universe, the Mother, the Sustainer, and the Grandsire. I am the knowable, the purifier, and the syllable Om. I am also the Ṛk, the Sāman, and the Yajus.
>
> 'I am the goal and the support; the Lord and the Witness; the Abode, the Refuge, and the Friend. I am the origin and the dissolution, the ground, the storehouse, and the Imperishable Seed.'[4]

---

[1] *Bhagavad-gītā*, IX. 10
[2] ibid., VII. 4-5
[3] *vide* ibid., Chapters VII, X
[4] ibid., IX. 17-18

Thus the immanence as well as transcendence of God are declared or implied everywhere in the *Gītā*. Especially are they very explicit in chapters seven through eleven (where in the latter the Lord reveals His Universal Form to Arjuna) and thirteen and fifteen.

With a universe originating from and pervaded by God, the phenomenon of the existence of evil is hard to reconcile. While most other religions propose another agent—a Satan or an Ahriman—besides God, as responsible for the evil, Hinduism boldly declares that both good and evil (if there be such a duality at all) come from the same God. Firstly, good and evil are not two distinctly separate entities—they differ in degree and not in kind. It is a fact experienced in life that what is good at one time is often considered evil at some other time. Secondly, it is only one existence or force that underlies both good and evil.

If we think that only good belongs in God's creation and that evil is an adventitious something, we simply betray our own purblindness or refusal to see facts. As Swami Vivekananda put it tellingly, 'A lame one-legged universe makes only a lame one-legged God.'[5] This idea, found in the Upaniṣads in seminal form, is given clear expression in the *Gītā*. The God of the *Gītā* declares that He alone is responsible for evil just as He is for good:

> 'I give heat; I hold back and send forth rain. I am immortality, O Arjuna, and also death. I am being and also non-being.'
>
> 'I am all-seizing death. I am the prosperity of those who are to be prosperous,...
>
> 'I am the gambling of cheats; I am the vigour of the strong. I am victory; I am effort; I am the quality of sattva in the good.'[6]

Although being a text glorifying the Divine Mother of the Universe, the *Caṇḍī* shares with the *Gītā* these basic features. To a cursory glance, this fact may of course not be perceptible. For the roots of the *Caṇḍī* go far back into Ṛg-vedic antiquity, to the *Devī-sūkta* (Hymn of the Devī) and *Rātri-sūkta* (Hymn to the Goddess of Night) occurring in the tenth book of that Veda. In these two hymns and especially in the first, are found the seed-ideas of the concept of Brahman's Power as Universal Mother. These seminal ideas have in later times been amplified in the Āgamas (manuals of rituals) and Śākta Tantras. Employing as its mould a gripping story and arresting poetic language both of which have popular appeal, the *Caṇḍī* re-presents these ideas of *Śakti*-worship with further amplification and great effect. In the *Devī-sūkta,* Vāk Ambhṛṇī, a woman-*ṛṣi,* identifying herself with the highest reality as Power, says:

> 'I move with the Rudras, Vasus, Ādityas, and the Viśwe-devas. I support Mitra, Varuṇa, Indra, Agni, and the twin gods the Aświns... I am the Empress of the Universe and the dispenser of wealth to worshippers. I possess the knowledge of the highest. Therefore I am premier among those who are to be worshipped with sacrificial oblations. I have manifested myself as the universe in diverse forms and have entered all beings as their souls... Through my power everyone eats, breathes, and hears what is uttered. Those who do not know me as their inner controller—they go down. Him whom I love I make powerful, or make him the creator Brahmā, or a *ṛṣi* (seer) or a wise man. I string the bow of Rudra when he wants to destroy the demons who hate holy people, and I fight for the welfare of my adorers. I have permeated heaven and earth...

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[5] *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U. P.), Vol VIII (1959), p. 253; also *cf.* Vol. VI (1963), p. 148

[6] *Gītā,* IX. 19; X. 34, 36

My dwelling place is the consciousness in the mental modifications. Thence I extend pervading all the worlds...Like the winds, I blow vehemently, myself creating all the worlds; though in my essential nature I transcend heaven and earth, yet through my glory all this universe is manifested.'

It is this cosmic Power, inseparable from Brahman, that the *Caṇḍī* calls Mahāmāyā, Viṣṇumāyā, Vaisṇavī-śakti, and so on.[7] Strangely, the *Gītā* and Śaṅkara's commentary on it, refer in very similar terms to this cosmic Power.[8] She, the great Mother, brings forth this universe, sustains it, and finally destroys it.[9] She is the support of the universe and pervades it.[10] She is possessed of the three *guṇas* but is never affected by them. She is the power of everything, conscient or non-conscient.[11] She is, as is the God of the *Gītā*, both transcendent and immanent.

Much of the philosophical thought of the *Caṇḍī* lies embedded in the four exquisite hymns that Brahmā and the other gods sing extolling the Mother. Especially the hymn which occurs in the fifth chapter, which is also called the *Devī-sūkta* of the Tantras, very impressively reveals the immanence of the Divine Mother. 'I salute that Devī again and again and yet again', runs the refrain of the more than twenty verses of this hymn. In these verses the Devī is saluted as the One who is present in all beings as consciousness, intelligence, sleep, hunger, reflection, power, thirst (or desire), forgiveness, genus, modesty, peace, faith, loveliness, good fortune, activity, memory, compassion, contentment, also as delusion, and especially as Mother.

The solution that the *Gītā* offered to the problem of evil in a world created by an omniscient, merciful God is, as Swami Vivekananda suggested, not further developed or emphasized, and so 'the idea goes to sleep'. But this idea becomes again awake in the *Caṇḍī* and is developed fully. Behind good and evil it is the same universal power that is acting. Just as the Mother is intelligence, consciousness, memory, and contentment in all beings, so also is She hunger, thirst, sleep, and delusion. She it is who, when pleased, bestows the highest knowledge which confers liberation on a human being. Again it is She who deludes all beings through the sense of 'I' and 'mine' and binds them down to worldly life. The gods in some verses of their praises address Her thus:

'O Devi, we bow before You, who are Yourself good fortune in the dwellings of the virtuous, and ill fortune in those of the vicious; intelligence in the hearts of the learned, faith in the hearts of the good, and modesty in the hearts of the high-born...'

'When pleased, you destroy all illnesses, but when wrathful You frustrate all the cherished desires...'

'Who is there except You in the sciences, in the scriptures, and in the Vedic sayings that light the lamp of discrimination? Still You cause this universe to whirl about again and again within the dense darkness of the depths of attachment.'[12]

The sage Medhas also says:

'In times of prosperity, She indeed is Lakṣmī who bestows prosperity on the homes of men; and in times of misfortune, She Herself becomes the goddess of misfortune, and brings about ruin.'[13]

According to the *Caṇḍī* there is no dichotomy between good and evil. Even simple logic must point to this: can one define evil without reference to some sort of 'good', or good without reference to some

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[7] *Caṇḍī*, I. 53, 54, 77; V. 14-16; XI. 5

[8] *Gītā*, IV. 6; VII. 14; Śankara's commentary on these and also on XIV. 27

[9] *Caṇḍī*, I. 75-6; XI. 11

[10] ibid., V. 13; XI. 4, 33; IV. 3; V. 77; XI. 24

[11] ibid., I. 82

[12] ibid., IV. 5; XI. 29, 31

[13] ibid., XII. 40

'evil'? If this world were all good, could we *call* it good? But, the *Caṇḍī* shows, everything in this relative existence comes from the Mother, whose love is unselfish, unattached. Behind both health and disease, fortune and misfortune, happiness and sorrow, gain and loss, life and death, is the irresistible will of the Mother. Man should learn from all his experiences, sweet and bitter, and rise above the relative life. When the Mother's hand is seen in the evil, the 'evilness' of the evil vanishes. We cease to be self-willed and learn to be in tune with the Mother's will. Swami Vivekananda explains it with great insight:

> 'She it is whose shadow is life and death. She is the pleasure in all pleasure. She is the misery in all misery. If life comes, it is the Mother; if death comes, it is the Mother. If heaven comes, She is. If hell comes, there is the Mother; plunge in. We have not faith, we have not patience to see this. We trust the man in the street; but there is one being in the universe we never trust and that is God. We trust Him when He works just our way. But the time will come when, getting blow after blow, the self-sufficient mind will die. In everything we do, the serpent ego is rising up. We are glad that there are so many thorns on the path. They strike the hood of the cobra.' [14]

Theory of Incarnations

The doctrine of divine incarnation is a special characteristic of Hinduism and Christianity. While Christianity limits the number of incarnations to one only, namely to Christ its founder, Hinduism declares that God incarnates again and again. There have been a number of incarnations in the past and innumerable more are yet to come in the future. The Upaniṣads, which have their religious and metaphysical sights set in the direction of the impersonal Absolute, do not speak of this doctrine, although some traces of it may be found after a diligent search. It should be said to the credit of the *Gītā* that it was the first scripture to enunciate this doctrine in clear terms and thus highlight the 'interest' of the Impersonal Absolute in the 'affairs' of the relative world. Whenever religion declines, says the *Gītā*, the Lord incarnates subjugating His *prakṛti*—accepts birth through His own māyā—for the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked, and for the establishment of dharma...' [15] Śaṅkara in his commentary on the *Gītā* asserts that the Lord is not *actually* born but *appears* through māyā to be born. In his masterly Preface to this commentary, too, Śaṅkara states that the Lord is seen *as though* born, *as though* endowed with a body, and *as though* showing compassion to men. However, the dualistic commentators believe that the embodiment of the Lord and His various awe-inspiring deeds actually are 'done' by Him. But His birth and actions, unlike those of ordinary men, are not subject to the dictates of nature, or *prakṛti* or māyā. He is always, even in the human vesture, the ruler of māyā, not its slave.

In the *Caṇḍī* similarly, we read that the Divine Mother, the Power of the Lord, incarnates again and again. At the end of the eleventh chapter, the Mother Herself assures the gods:

> 'Thus whenever there shall be oppression arising out of the demons, I shall incarnate and accomplish the destruction of these foes.'

Reading these two parallel statements, one may be a little puzzled about the actual fact of the incarnation—whether it is the Lord that 'becomes flesh' or His Power, the Divine Mother. Whatever the philosophers and exegetes may say on this question, we for our part find the answer

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[14] *The Works*, Vol. VI, p. 150

[15] *vide Gītā*, IV. 6-8

in the following statements of Sri Ramakrishna—who is himself regarded as one of the greatest of divine incarnations—and Swami Vivekananda, his chief apostle. Says Sri Ramakrishna:

'The greatest manifestation of His Power is through an Incarnation.... It is Sakti, the Power of God, that is born as an Incarnation.'

'It is Sakti alone that becomes flesh as God Incarnate. According to one school of thought, Rama and Krishna are but two waves in the Ocean of Absolute Bliss and Consciousness.'[16]

And as if echoing and affirming the truth of these statements, Swamiji says:

'A bit of Mother, a drop, was Krishna, another was Buddha, another was Christ.... Worship Her if you want love and wisdom.'[17]

Self-Surrender: The Goal and the Way

Starting on a note of heroic action, the *Gītā* moves through several notes of *jñāna* (wisdom), *bhakti* (devotion) and combinations of all these, to the crescendo of complete self-surrender to God. Even in the earlier chapters, there are occasional references to this spirit of surrender. As for instance: Śrī Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna that since māyā, constituted of the three *guṇas,* is divine, it is difficult for one to cross it. But then, those who take shelter in the Lord, cross the river of māyā. Still it is only at the end of the book that the great message of complete self-surrender to God is proclaimed with highest emphasis. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says to Arjuna:

'If, indulging in self-conceit, you say to yourself, "I will not fight", vain is your resolution. Your nature will compel you....

'The Lord dwells in the hearts of all beings, O Arjuna, and by His māyā causes them to revolve as though mounted on a machine.

'Take refuge in Him alone with all your soul, O Bhārata. By His grace will you gain Supreme Peace and the Everlasting Abode.'

Then, assuring Arjuna that since he is His beloved, He is going to tell him that only which is for his good, He exhorts:

'Abandon all dharmas and come to Me alone for shelter. I will deliver you from all sins; do not grieve.'

The *Caṇḍī* on the other hand starts with the note of self-surrender and culminates also on the same note. Furthermore, the stress is on securing the Divine Mother's grace, for worldly prosperity and enjoyment (*bhoga*) as long as one has any desire for this life, and for liberation (*apavarga*) in the afterlife. Because the Mother, the Great Power of God, is responsible for the world-process in every minute detail. Again, it is Her delusive power which makes each living being cling to the sense of 'I' and 'mine', and through that, to the world. If She, out of Her grace, cuts this knot of ignorance and attachment, then that individual forthwith attains freedom forever. Says the sage Medhas at the very beginning, to Suratha and Samādhi:

'It is by Her the world is deluded. Verily She, Bhagavatī Mahāmāyā, forcibly drawing the minds of even the wise, throws them into delusion.... It is She who, when propitious, becomes a boon-giver to human beings for their final liberation. She is the supreme Knowledge, the cause of final liberation, and eternal. She is the cause of the bondage of transmigration and the sovereign over all lords.'[18]

Finally, after narrating the wonderful accounts of the manifestations and exploits of the Divine Mother to his grief-stricken enquirers, the sage concludes by returning to the note of self-surrender to the Mother:

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[16] 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 600004, 1947), pp. 702, 212

[17] *The Works,* Vol. VII (1958), p. 27

[18] *Caṇḍī,* I. 54-8

'By the Devī is this world upheld. Knowledge, again, is conferred by Her, the Māyā of Lord Viṣṇu.
'By Her, you, this merchant, and other men of discrimination, are being deluded; and others were deluded in the past, and will be deluded in the future. O King, take refuge in Her, the Supreme Ruler. She indeed when worshipped bestows on men enjoyment, heaven, and final release (from transmigration).' [19]

Following the sage's advice, both Suratha and Samādhi retire to the bank of a river for propitiating the Mother and gaining their desired objectives. Through their severe austerities, devoted worship and contemplation, and one-pointed meditation, they succeed in getting the vision of the Mother. King Suratha chooses the boon of regaining his kingdom in this life, and birth again as a sovereign. But Samādhi, the wise merchant, full of dispassion for the world, chooses that knowledge which removes the attachment in the form of 'mine' and 'I'. The book says that Samādhi attained the supreme Knowledge which is born of self-realization, and the king his lost kingdom. He was born next as the eighth Manu, named Sāvarṇi.

[19] ibid., XIII. 3-5

LETTERS OF A SAINT

Benares City
23/6/19

My dear Doctor,

Yours of the 18th inst. came duly to hand. I am glad to learn that you are enjoying the company of the Swamis there to your advantage and benefit. It is not always that we can retain the ardour and zeal that come in us from spiritual advancement, but we should not feel disheartened, or lose courage but should engage ourselves the more and never give up the game. It is through the grace of Mother that we get such heightened states of spiritual fervour. It may disappear for a time, but it can never vanish. It must reappear if you are after it. Nevertheless if you feel dry and lack all enthusiasm even then if you keep on praying to Mother tenaciously, She is sure to send you light and comfort that will fill your heart again with love and devotion. Think yourself as Mother's child always that you really are, and never cease asking Her for what you aspire to have, and sooner or later they will come to you sure as morning follows the night....

Trusting this will find you well and happy, with my best wishes and love to you and to all the members of the Advaita Ashrama,

Yours affectionately,
TURIYANANDA

Benares City
21/July/19

My dear Doctor,

Your very kind letter of the 18th inst. is to hand....

It has given me very great pleasure to understand that you are enjoying the reading of Upanishads in that quiet and holy place and have felt uplifted by their influences. But why have you expressed so pitiably about yourself in it? Why do you care so much about your past Samskaras (latent impressions)? You do not concern yourself much for the dreams from which you have awakened though very bad they might have seemed when dreaming. So why should you think so seriously about the Samskaras which are now no more, but are the things of the past? Look on them as past dreams from which you have awakened.

Numerous thoughts may come in the mind during meditation, but why take note of them? Let them come and go. Be yourself a witness of them, and have nothing to do with them. Engage your mind with nothing but thinking of the Ishtam (the chosen deity), whatever It might be, and try to 'dilute' yourself with It. Do not identify yourself with any Samskara at all, and you shall feel free. What you shall think that you shall become. That is the secret. So if you think of Christ, then Christ you shall become inwardly, and as long as you don't become that, don't give up thinking about your Ishtam as deeply as possible. You must have patience. Rome was not built in a day. You never forget that.

May you succeed in attaining your end is my sincere prayer. Kindly remember me to all the inmates of the Advaita Ashrama and give them my heartfelt best wishes and love. With my best wishes and love to you as ever,

Yours affectionately,
TURIYANANDA

Benares City
10/10/19

My dear Doctor,

I am in receipt of your kind letter of the 1st inst. I have been very glad to learn that you have improved in health and strength by the change in Maymyo [in Burma]. May you get on well. It is nice that you have sent applications to different places. I wish you may get some appointment soon. Of course, I can understand your feelings very well, but that won't do; you must work still for some time at least to put your daughter in a fair way of prosperity. When you have done that you will have time to think of giving up the wretched worldly connection once for all. Then you shall feel free to retire permanently with a conscience at once free from all responsibilities. But if you give up the world now probably you will not have that peace of mind which comes from renunciation. May Mother give you strength to do that which seems your duty to the world first and then giving up everything

(*Continued on p.* 421)

ESSAY ON APPLIED RELIGION

THE GRACE OF GOD

SWAMI BUDHANANANDA

I

In this essay we propose to discuss one of the most mysterious phenomena of spiritual life, namely the Grace of God.

The question may be asked: how does 'The Grace of God' become the subject of an essay on applied religion? The answer is simple. In a manner of speaking, if 'Love of God' is applied religion from the side of the devotee, 'The Grace of God' is applied religion from the side of God. And both are intimately related because love of God does not grow without the grace of God.

> 'One day a disciple asked the Holy Mother (at Jayrambati): Mother, how does one realize God? Worship, Japa, meditation—do these help one?'
> Mother: None of these can help.
> Disciple: Then how does one get the vision of God?
> Mother: It is only through His grace. But one must practise meditation and Japa. That removes impurities of mind. One must practise spiritual disciplines such as worship and so forth. As one gets the fragrance of a flower by handling it, or as one gets the smell of sandalwood by rubbing it against a stone, in the same way one gets spiritual awakening by constantly thinking of God. But you can realize Him right now, if you become desireless.'[1]

But you cannot become desireless without the grace of God!

What indeed is the grace of God? Truly speaking, only a God-man (Incarnation of God) can categorically say, 'Such is the grace of God.'

Saints can authentically interpret grace from their personal experiences. Others can only speculate as to its nature on the basis of the teachings of God-men and saints.

Since grace is entirely a supra-rational phenomenon, it is beyond the power of an ordinary man to say that it ought to be like this or ought not to be like that. We cannot possibly frame a code of conduct for God. And grace is entirely God's personal prerogative. Our discursive intellect can thus be of little use in comprehending any of the mysteries of divine grace.

II

In the *Gītā* Śrī Kṛṣṇa, as God incarnate on earth, makes at least two categorical statements about divine grace. There cannot be any more authentic statement on grace, we believe, than the words of the Lord Himself. He says:

> 'By that devotion he knows Me, knows what, in truth, I am and who I am. Then, having known Me in truth, he forthwith enters into Me.
> 'Even though engaged in all kinds of action, a man who has taken refuge in Me reaches, by My grace, the eternal and imperishable Abode.'[2]

Further:

> 'Fixing your heart on Me, you will overcome every difficulty by My grace; but if from self-conceit you do not listen to Me, you shall perish utterly.'[3]

It is instructive to note that the Lord is

[1] *Sri Sarada Devi—The Holy Mother* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras-600004, 1949), p. 513

[2] *Bhagavad-gītā,* XVIII. 55-6

[3] ibid., XVIII. 58

not saying that grace is conditioned by anything. But He is indicating certain situations when grace is found to flow in. That will do for us. Firstly: when one loves God and takes refuge in Him (which is easy if one really loves), grace descends on him. Secondly: when the heart of the devotee is fixed on the Lord and he has renounced the self-destructive path of heedlessness to divine commandments, grace descends on him. And by that grace he overcomes all obstacles.

One simple deduction is possible from these teachings. The Lord seems to say: If you love Me unwaveringly you will have My grace. A further implication is also clear, that this love will have to be pure love and not a device for getting at God's grocery—the storehouse of what are often euphemistically called 'the good things of life'. No, not that; love for God will have to be world-forgetting by the world-forgot. Then grace will descend.

In another place in the *Gītā* Śrī Kṛṣṇa makes a similar categorical statement:

> 'I am the same toward all beings; to Me there is none hateful or dear. But those who worship Me with devotion —they are in Me and I too am in them.' [4]

When the Lord says, 'I too am in them', it certainly follows that grace must be there. And when we inquire what has attracted this grace, and the Lord Himself, it is clearly stated by Him in the words: 'those who worship Me with devotion'. From this again we may deduce this much in regard to grace: it seems always to descend on one who worships God with devotion.

Is there no other case in which the grace of God will be manifest, not simply out of the Lord's unknowable prerogative, but, perhaps, because of certain favourable situations or achievements in the life of the devotee?

Śrī Kṛṣṇa has certainly indicated some such additional situations in the *Gītā*. There is for example a most amazing self-contradiction on His part: having said as we have seen, with a perfectly straight face, '...to Me there is none hateful or dear', the Lord proceeds in the twelfth chapter to declare with ardent repetition in as many as eight verses, 'Such an one is dear to Me...' And He does not even stop there: in the last verse of that chapter He almost breaks down with love for His devotees, saying such devotees 'are exceedingly dear to Me'.

This is most pleasing to hear, don't you think so? This bending down of the personal God from a posture of supreme unconcern, to that of most affectionate concern! But of course that is not *our* main concern just now.

What we are trying to see is that when the Lord says 'he is dear to Me', we must have here a case of grace—His love and grace being clearly related to each other. To try to understand the nature of grace and its ways of movement, we should study these verses carefully, because if we can develop these qualities in our life, the Lord is promise-bound to hold us as dear to Him. That will surely be the source of enough grace for us!

Here are the persons about each one of whom the Lord Himself says, 'he is dear to Me':

> 'He who never hates any being and is friendly and compassionate to all, who is free from the feelings of "I" and "mine" and even-minded in pain and pleasure, who is forbearing, ever content, and steady in contemplation, who is self-controlled and possessed of firm conviction, and who has consecrated his mind and understanding to Me—dear to Me is the one who is thus devoted to Me.
>
> 'He by whom the world is not afflicted

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[4] ibid., IX. 29

and whom the world cannot afflict, he who is free from joy and anger, fear and anxiety—he is dear to Me.

'He who is free from dependence, who is pure and prompt, unconcerned and untroubled, and who has renounced all undertakings—dear to Me is the man who is thus devoted to Me.

'He who rejoices not and hates not, who grieves not and desires not, who has renounced both good and evil and is full of devotion—he is dear to Me.

'He who is alike to foe and friend, unaltered in honour and dishonour; who is the same in cold and heat, in pleasure and pain; who is free from attachment, who is unchanged by praise and blame; who is silent, content with whatever he has, homeless, firm of mind, and full of devotion—that man is dear to Me.'[5]

Then finally the Lord indicates those devotees that are exceedingly dear to Him:

'Exceedingly dear to Me are they who regard Me as the Supreme Goal and, endowed with faith and devotion, follow this Immortal Dharma.'[6]

From these words of Śrī Kṛṣṇa it is possible for us to reach some very revealing conclusions about the nature of grace. Of course this will be only our own thinking. Yet for these deductions the Lord Himself has provided us the grounds.

It will be noticed that the Lord did not simply stop with saying 'He who is devoted to Me is dear to Me.' He went into great detail to indicate what kind of devotion we need in order to be dear to Him. If we carefully analyse these details we shall see that he is dear to the Lord who is doing his best for attaining *śuddhā bhakti*, pure devotion, and *śuddha jñāna*, pure knowledge; and what is more, devoting his energies to *loka-saṅgraha*, the welfare of all his fellow-creatures. Those who are well-confirmed in these divine strivings have always been recipients of the Lord's maximum grace, being exceedingly dear to Him.

We must understand that the Lord is not needing anything from us. He is complete in Himself: what we do or do not do cannot at all help or hinder Him. Still, when we do our maximum to manifest the highest in us, for attaining self-fulfilment or illumination—all being really for His sake—grace has always been found to flow in.

Supposing one is not that pure and good: supposing one has a record of sins. What about grace then? Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself implies an answer to this question also, in the ninth chapter of the *Gītā*:

'Even the most sinful man, if he worships Me with unswerving devotion, must be regarded as righteous; for he has formed the right resolution.

'He soon becomes righteous and attains eternal peace. Proclaim it boldly, O son of Kuntī, that My devotee never perishes.'[7]

When a sinner rightly resolves, he will certainly begin to discover the benign flow of grace surrounding him. This is why Meister Eckhart said, 'God is God of the present.' He takes you for what you are, not for what you have been!

III

It may be re-emphasized at this stage that though we have indicated, on the basis of the Lord's teachings, some features of the nature of grace, it would be clearly absurd to say that 'I have done this, so grace must be with me.' God, or whatever may flow from God to us, is not conditioned by anything we may do or not do.

There is no bargaining counter in the realm of grace. There is no banking system in grace. There are no price-tags attached to various degrees of grace. There is no time-table or almanac—pub-

[5] ibid., XII. 13-19

[6] ibid., XII. 20

[7] ibid., IX. 30-1

lished or unpublished—to indicate when grace may descend on whom.

Divine grace is no respecter of reason or philosophy, piety or religion, or value or ethics of man. Grace of God is unconditioned and unconditional.

Sri Ramakrishna with the authority born of the highest knowledge, makes some categorical statements about grace. Among them are:

> 'You may try thousands of times, but nothing can be achieved without God's grace. One cannot see God without His grace....
>
> 'God doesn't easily appear in the heart of a man who feels himself to be his own master. But God can be seen the moment His grace descends. He is the Sun of Knowledge.... One can see God only if He turns His light toward His own face.' [8]

The question may be asked, If without God's grace nothing can be achieved in spiritual life, and if grace is unconditioned and unconditional, what then is the meaning, necessity, or purpose of our spiritual strivings? This question is largely answered by Sri Ramakrishna himself:

> 'The wind of God's grace is incessantly blowing. Lazy sailors on this sea of life do not take advantage of it. But the active and the strong always keep the sails of their minds unfurled to catch the friendly breeze, and thus reach their destination very soon.' [9]

Thus if we have any fear that this unconditioned and unconditional grace could ever be capricious, that fear should be set at rest when we come to know from a teacher like Sri Ramakrishna that the wind of grace is incessantly blowing for all. Unless we unfurl our sails we will not catch the wind. That is surely no fault of the wind.

Without spiritual striving—the unfurling of our sails and keeping them open—we shall not be able to undersand what grace is, even when we are surrounded by it. Obviously in such a situation, we shall not be able to take advantage of grace. We will almost certainly take a wrong view of things, which will lead us further and further from the Goal.

> 'One day Swami Vivekananda was with a group of disciples discussing the omniscience of God and the fact that His grace is unconditioned and uninfluenced by the outer forms of religion, dogma or ritualism. The great Swami spoke very forcefully: "He is free! He is free! He is free! Man's salvation depends upon His free will, free grace, and whomever He chooses He can lift up in an instant from the mire of delusion and ignorance. He is ever free! He is ever free!"
>
> 'After listening to this, one disciple very humbly asked him, what then was the use of man's individual endeavour and striving, practice of self-denial and austerity, of observance of devotion and meditation? After a thoughtful moment the Swami said:
>
> '"Suppose you sit in a mango orchard and vigilantly watch for the ripe mangoes to fall from the trees, will you not have the first and greatest opportunity to collect these ripe mangoes—far more than a passer-by? Similarly, although God's mercy is not limited, is not bound and conditioned by any regulation, and He can bestow His divine grace upon any one He chooses, still the one who vigilantly watches for divine grace, and practises faithfully and with ardour his spiritual devotions, has the first opportunity to receive God's blessings, because of his vigilance."' [10]

It is like this. The whole world may be flooded by sunshine. But if you stay in the basement you avoid the sunshine and its effects on your rickety body. If

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[8] 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub. Madras, 1947), p. 106

[9] *Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras 1938), saying No. 679 (p. 207)

[10] Quoted from *Message of the East* (La Crescenta, California), Spring issue, 1963

you on the contrary come up the steps, leave your unhealthy confines and go into the open air, you will begin to get health and strength. Can you get that while drowsing in the basement? If not, is that the fault of the sun?

In order to benefit from God's overflowing grace, we must come out of the basement of our unregenerate existence, and climbing up by the steps of spiritual striving we must get into the open of God, even to begin to benefit from His grace.

The Holy Mother says: 'The grace of God is the thing that is needful. One should pray for the grace of God.' [11] Still the persistent question may recur: If God's grace is always blowing, why need we pray for it?

It is true our prayer does not create God's grace. But our prayers—and the very disposition behind the prayers—will so affect our own understanding that it will become possible for us to comprehend at least a little of God's grace.

For it is not in the least easy to comprehend grace. With clouded intellect we are constantly taking a wrong view of things. It needs God's grace even to understand God's grace.

Here is a fine passage from 'M's' *Gospel* bearing on this point. One day Sri Ramakrishna was telling 'M':

'One who thinks of God, day and night, beholds Him everywhere. It is like a man's seeing flames on all sides after he has gazed fixedly at one flame for some time.

' "But that is not the real flame", flashed through M's mind.

'Sri Ramakrishna, who could read a man's inmost thought, said: "One doesn't lose consciousness by thinking of Him who is all Spirit, all Consciousness. Shivanath once remarked that too much thinking about God confounds the brain. Thereupon I said to him, 'How can one become unconscious by thinking of Consciousness?' "

'M: "Yes, sir, I realize that. It isn't like thinking of an unreal object. How can a man lose his intelligence if he always fixes his mind on Him whose very nature is eternal Intelligence?"

'Master (*with pleasure*): "It is through God's grace that you understand that. The doubts of the mind will not disappear without His grace." ' [12]

This clarification of understanding—the disappearance of doubts—is a most important manifestation of divine grace.

When one receives enough of Grace for this clarification, one will then take the right step, will think the right thought, will utter the right word, without much further effort.

(*To be concluded*)

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[11] *Sri Sarada Devi.*, p. 422

[12] *The Gospel*, p. 43

TAGORE—SOME ASPECTS OF HIS CONSCIOUSNESS

SRI KALYAN SEN

All problems of aesthetic creation are problems of consciousness in their primary stage. Problems of technique come up only in the secondary stage.

An enormous and involved task awaits us when we try to single out one aspect of the multifaceted creativity of personalities like Tagore and treat this from the above viewpoint. The real hurdle is that literary and artistic creations of a high level impose upon us the absolute necessity of being able to be aware at the same level of consciousness as the artist himself In this essay, we will confine ourselves mostly to

Tagore's poems and songs in so far as they give insight into his consciousness.

Let us begin with a remark made by the Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashrama who was herself an artist during the younger period of her life and had fairly extensive opportunity to study European aesthetics in the round.

> 'The discipline of Art has at its centre the same principle as the discipline of Yoga. In both the aim is to become more and more conscious.'

Further studies and experiences reveal that the chief characteristic of this consciousness is the turning of the artist into an instrument of Beauty, Truth, and Love. These are self-existent infinite dimensions of higher planes of consciousness. The more perfect the channel of expression, the more abiding will be the effects of artistic creation. Some confirmation of this is available from such diverse places as Germany, Britain, China, Japan, India, the Americas, in fact from areas scattered all over the globe. This is rightly so because we are told that this matter of artistic awareness is a global phenomenon. It is something deeply rooted in the group consciousness of the whole human race, beginning perhaps from the days of primitive art running through the Middle Ages right down to our times and stretching far into future art. Karlheinz Stockhausen writes in *Litany* (10 May 1968):

> For many years I have said it innumerable times
> and sometimes written it; that
> I do not make MY music, but
> only relay the vibrations I receive;
> that I function like a translator,
> that I am a radio. When I compose in the right way,
> my SELF no longer exists.

Nandalal Bose says in some notes culled from his coversations:

'In artistic sadhana, the artist get effaced. Of course he has his personal emotions, *sanskaras* (formations) etc. But as he begins to create, he passes beyond his emotions. Then he becomes free from all attachment to the world of matter. The intensity of his personal experiences gets transformed into impersonal art form. Thus he travels beyond the limits of his personality and his creation passes from emotion to the world of bliss.'

The root of all aesthetic creations is in the third level of human personality. This is not recognized by the diadic concept of man as developed by the currently reigning occidental psychological schools which are confined to the conscious and subconscious levels. Oriental yoga is primarily applied psychology both in its practice and its manifold theoretical developments. It reveals and conceptually adds the third level of human personality, the superconscious. Says Aurobindo in his *Lights On Yoga*:

> 'Even in Europe, the existence of something behind the surface is now very frequently admitted, but its nature is mistaken and it is called subconscient or subliminal, while really it is very conscious in its own way and not subliminal but only behind the veil. It is, according to our psychology, connected with the small outer personality by certain centres of consciousness of which we become aware by Yoga. Only a little of the inner being escapes through these centres into the outer life, but that little is the best part of ourselves and responsible for our art, poetry, philosophy, ideals, religious aspirations, efforts at knowledge and perfection. But the inner centres are for the most part closed or asleep—to open them and make them awake and active is one aim of Yoga.'

Although during his long lifetime Tagore covered a wide spectrum of creativity, his poems and lyrics could be broadly classified into two different categories. In the earlier period of his life including the award of the Nobel Prize, his consciousness

developed a relationship with the Divine and the Cosmos which was dual and mostly anthropomorphic: *vide Gītāñjali*, 'Crescent Moon', etc. His well-known experience set down in *Nirjharer Swapnabhanga* is very significant but not unique. Similar experiences have been reported by many poets, artists and other people all over the world. Quite a few of these have been referred to by Dr. Raynor Johnson in his book, *The Imprisoned Splendour*. This characteristic of Tagore's writings was partly instrumental in getting W. B. Yeats emotionally involved. Many of the pioneers who joined him during the early days of Shantiniketan were first attracted by this aspect of his writings.

During the later period of his life, his consciousness, to a large extent, became less anthropomorphic, more cosmic and more impersonal. Personal relationships with an external Divinity gradually gave place to a single and manifold consciousness wherein the boundary between 'inner' and 'outer' became increasingly thin.

By the time Tagore reached about the middle of the first part of his creative life, he had attained adequate artistic sophistication. Creative activity as a means to experience the manifested world with a heightened consciousness, was very obviously spelt out in one of his songs, the free rendering of which is given below:

> It is only when I look at the world
> through songs that I can know and
> understand it.
>
> It is only then that its language of light
> fills the sky with love.
>
> It is only then that the particles of its
> dust
>
> cry out with the supreme message.
> It is then that it ceases to be outer
> and becomes inner.
>
> ... ...
>
> Torrents of bliss wash away outlines of
> all forms.
> Then I find myself in whispered com-
> munication with all.

In mystical parlance, this experience of the outer becoming inner could perhaps be termed 'expansion of consciousness' but attained through the medium of an art form. Pramathanath Bisi, one of the leading writers and critics of Bengali literature, mentions in his reminiscences of student days at Shantiniketan that when Tagore received the inspiration and the melodic outlines to create new songs, he used to rush to Dinendranath who was an expert at writing down the relevant notations before they would slip away from Tagore's consciousness. During this period, Tagore would remain almost completely oblivious of everything and everyone around him.

Tagore was never in any great doubt as to the fate of his creations. In effect, he once said:

'Posterity may discard all that I have created except my songs. These emanate from the deepest level of my being and I know that the mass consciousness of Bengal will accept them.'

The only way we could interpret this conviction would be the real possibility that Tagore did manage to identify his subtle inner consciousness as the source of his songs and realized this as part of a larger group consciousness. The same applies to his drawings and paintings but in a much wider context.

Identity with this consciousness generates a specific way of looking at terrestrial existence. In his delightfully sparkling essay 'Modern Poetry' written in the thirties, he says:

> 'If I am asked, "What makes it really modern ?"—I would assert that it is the ability to view the world integrally without getting involved. It is only this vision that is luminous, pure and joyful. It is that analytical vision which modern science wields in unravelling the secrets of the physical world. For modern

poetry, this uninvolved outlook ought to be perennially modern. But this vision is not really modern in the temporal sense because it does not belong to any particular age. It belongs to that person who can move freely around in this open world.'

The firm assertion that the 'refusal of the ascetic' was not his way was already well grounded in his world outlook. Spiritually, Tagore was not seeking to escape from the phenomenal world into some form of transcendental liberation. He wanted blissful liberation while living squarely in the middle of dynamic manifestation. This is one of the fundamental hopes he had in common with Sri Aurobindo.

Some more experiential identities between these two personalities can be discerned if we bring in the interesting aspect of Tagore's writings in response to requests for autographs. As a widely travelled person, he was often faced with such requests. Some of these short but highly meaningful verses were subsequently collected and published under the title *Shphuliṅga* (Sparks). It may be worthwhile to point out some apparent similarities to Aurobindo. This is done in the parentheses following the free renderings of the originals.

The Unknown plays its manifold melodies
On the flute of the known.
(Suprasensual Reality using human sense organs to interpret the manifested world.)

When Light, lovingly, places Its garland
Around the neck of darkness,
Creation begins.
(Supermind encircling the Inconscient evolutionary base.)

The primal splendour of love moves about in space
In its purest effulgence.
But in descending upon the earth
It garbs itself in manifold forms
With multiple hues and aromas.
(If Idea embracing Force begot the worlds, Delight of Being begot the Idea. Because the Infinite conceived an innumerable delight in itself, therefore worlds and universes came into existence.)

As mentioned earlier, Tagore tried to accept this phenomenal world as something to be lived in with fulfilment but without involvement. It was not supposed to be transcended and left behind. This would seem to be fundamentally very much more difficult, wider and more integral than the great and almost pervasive mystic tradition of liberation which in India perhaps originated with the Upaniṣads. This integral experience which includes both the transcendent and immanent aspects of Reality is perhaps the dominant key in *Ṛg-vedic* hymns.

Of course Tagore had his human limitations and never underwent a formal spiritual discipline. But the important fact is that up to his ripe old age, he kept progressing in artistic consciousness. In him, the passage from mind to the Higher Mind and the Illumined Mind became clearer and clearer. He was becoming more and more successful in acting as an instrument of expression of higher worlds.

This maturing artistic consciousness in Tagore was not only moving up vertically. It was also spreading horizontally. At about the age of 70, he picked up the painter's brush. He had no previous schooling in this medium. Nevertheless, some of his drawings and paintings are so mature and so full of suggestions from supraphysical worlds that one could perhaps conclude that his highly developed general consciousness had nearly transcended the limitations due to lack of formal training. He was himself aware that these ideas, images, and their interactions were coming from a source beyond his conscious surface mind.

During the same period, a parallel development is discernible in his poems which, from the viewpoint of content, were be-

coming more and more universalized. Free renderings of two such poems are given below:

Waking up in the morning
I beheld this rose in the vase
And asked—
Through the aeons the power that has
brought you
To this pinnacle of beauty
By-passing the ruthless grip of the ugly
and the imperfect—
Is it blind and indifferent
Like the ascetic sannyasin ?
Does it not also differentiate between the
ugly and the beautiful ?
Do all its actions emanate from knowl-
edge and force only—
Does not consciousness play a part ?
Some argue and say—
In creation, the ugly and the beautiful
take adjacent seats,
There is no bar in between.
I am a poet and have not learnt to argue.
My vision of this universe is in the truth
of its Integral Existence.
Millions of stars and planetary systems
in space
Carry in them this stupendous order of
harmony
With perfect rhythm and melody;
Perversion does not have a chance.
Right there in space blooms with its
layer upon layer of petals,
That vast luminous rose.

'From the Sickbed', Poem no. 21

On my way to recovery
The inviting arms of joyful life
Blessed me with a new vision of the
universe.
The blue sky basking in the sun,
Like the '*āsana*' of the ancient '*tapaswī*',
Unfolded the primal endless moment of
birth of Time.
I realized this one life-span
As but a link in a chain of new births.
Like the spectrum of solar light.
This single picture carries within it
The manifold and invisible creative
elements.

'From the Sickbed', Poem no. 23

The great misfortune overhanging all the literary creations of Tagore is the limited geographical spread of the Bengali language. This is the reason why his South American hostess, Victoria Okampo, once said: 'Oh! Why were you not born in this country! I could then have direct access to your originals.' To make this rich heritage permeate the world-mind, we need another genius who must be a cultural polyglot.

Tagore was acutely conscious of the problem of evil in this world and part of his outlook is here expressed in a letter to Rothenstein:

'I have nothing to do directly with politics. I am not a nationalist, moderate or immoderate, in my political aspirations. But politics is not a mere abstraction. It has its personality and it does intrude into my life where I am human. It kills and maims individuals, it tells lies, it uses its sacred sword of justice for the purpose of massacre, it spreads misery broadcast over centuries of exploitation and I cannot say to myself "Poet, you have nothing to do with these facts for they belong to politics."'

But although Tagore wanted evil to be overcome, the ways and means to do this were not there. Mankind's age-long struggles for improving the material world had been fruitless because no spiritual forces equivalent to the mighty powers of Evil had yet appeared. The only remedy, as pointed out by Sri Aurobindo, is in the development of a 'Supramental Force'—or in becoming receptive here on the worldly plane, to that which already exists—capable of conquering the forces of Evil on this plane also. To turn aside and seek Nirvana for oneself alone, was to leave to the enemy an uncontested and grim triumph.

For a perspective of Tagore as a poet, the best thing one can do is to conclude with Sri Aurobindo:

'To find our self and the self of things is not to go through a rarefied ether of thought into Nirvana, but to discover the

whole greatest integral power of our complete existence.

'This need is the sufficient reason for attaching the greatest importance to those poets in whom there is the double seeking of this twofold power, the truth and reality of the eternal self and spirit in man and things, and the insistence on life. All the most significant and vital work in recent poetry has borne this stamp; the rest is of the hour but this is of the future. It is the highest note of Whitman, widening, as in one who seeks and sees much but has not fully found, a great pioneer poetry, an opening of a new view rather than a living in its accomplished fullness; it is constantly repeated from the earth side in Meredith, comes down from the spiritual side in all A.E.'s work, moves between the earth and the life of the worlds behind in Yeats' subtle rhythmic voices of vision and beauty, echoes with a large fullness in Carpenter. The poetry of Tagore owes its sudden and universal success to this advantage that he gives us more of this discovery and fusion for which the mind of our age is in quest, than any other creative writer of the time. His work is a constant music of the over-passing of the borders, a chant-filled realm in which the subtle sounds and lights of the truth of the spirit give new meanings to the finer subtleties of life....

'Tagore has been a wayfarer towards the same goal as ours in his own way—that is the main thing, the exact stage of advance and putting of the steps are minor matters.'

(*Continued from p.* 411)

devote yourself wholly to Mother when you have finished that duty. You are intelligent enough and I need hardly speak more on this subject. No haste, have patience and Mother will do all for you which is right in right time....

Trusting this will find you hale and hearty, and with my best wishes and love to you,

Yours in the Lord,
TURIYANANDA

Benares City
24/10/19

My dear Doctor,

....

I am not quite happy to be informed that you could not get any favourable reply to the applications you sent. Let us see what becomes of the other applications that are yet unreplied. You can go on with your meditation even when in service, and you need not give up everything for that just at present. Your mind has told you what is true under the circumstances that you are now in. You are really not fit for that state which you think you are prepared to accept, viz., the state of absolute poverty. Therefore don't call your mind a rogue or insincere, but it seems to me that it has proved your true friend by giving you advice to ponder over the subject with a profound silence. I hope Mother will furnish you with a post that is suitable to you very shortly, and will give you ample opportunity for meditation and thinking of Her sincerely and with love. My best wishes and love to Delicia dear, and to yourself.

Yours in the Lord,
TURIYANANDA

SERMONETTES AT ST. MORITZ—V

SWAMI YATISWARANANDA

Some people stock bricks but do not build anything. So also with ideas. It is no use having a pile of thoughts and ideas. The ideas that we gather from different sources should be used to build up a consistent thinking pattern. We should build our own philosophy of life. Every idea that we borrow or learn should become a part and parcel of our own individual life.

If you wish to help others the only way is by living the life you intend them to follow. No use placing before them a heap of bricks. They must see the edifice you have built for yourself. At the same time, nobody should blindly imitate others. One may follow another model but must make alterations suited to one's individual temperament.

In the beginning, construction work is troublesome and we may have to pull down some walls raised on unsure foundation. But later on, as we gain more experience, it becomes a pleasure to build up our own edifice—the edifice of our personality.

The creative urge is in all of us. But the nature of creation varies from one plane to another. The self is a multi-storied structure. The laws of construction vary from one story to another. You have to build up your body in one way, mind in another way, and soul in a third way—within the general plan of an integrated total personality. The goal is harmonious development of body, mind, and soul.

Learn to plan your own spiritual life. Try to integrate into your whole personality whatever you are learning from others, your studies and meditation. Do not be satisfied with lower planes of existence. Rise to the plane of intuition through systematic moral and spiritual culture.

*

Some people desire what is good but follow the wrong path. This is because of ignorance. Ignorance, according to Advaita Vedānta, does a twofold mischief. First it covers the real Self and then, it creates all sorts of wrong ideas. When you see a rope in the dark you may mistake it for a snake and get frightened. What causes this illusion? Ignorance. It is owing to ignorance that our aspiration for the Divine is discontinuous and we practise spiritual disciplines by fits and starts. Ignorance causes forgetfulness. Of all forms of forgetfulness the worst is self-forgetfulness. The real Self is forgotten owing to the identification of consciousness with various objects.

Māyā hides the Self. To this primordial ignorance we go on adding layer after layer of wrong ideas and desires until the Self is totally forgotten. We just do not know what or where it is. Revive the memory of your true Self through constant struggle and then see what a change comes over your life.

*

We must purify our minds. Not only for our own sake but also for the sake of others. We generally leave this mental purification out of account. Each thought contributes something to the mental atmosphere that envelops us. There is a thought world even more real than the physical world. Thoughts are mental vibrations. These vibrations are constantly spreading from us out into the surrounding thought world. Good thoughts generate more good vibrations. Whoever comes in touch with these good vibrations gets benefited. These vibrations make repetition of good thoughts easier for us also. After a spell of bad thinking the mental atmosphere around us becomes unfavourable for us to start thinking good thoughts

again. Again, when the mental atmosphere around us becomes full of good vibrations, these check bad thoughts arising in our mind. This constant interchange of vibrations between our mind and the Cosmic mind is continuously going on without our notice. So take care of what you think. Never lapse into wild, random thinking. Be alert and consciously maintain a constant stream of good thoughts. That can save you and help others too.

*

Purification is a slow process. The real Self is hidden by three sheaths—the physical, the mental, and the causal. It is the great task in spiritual life to purify body and mind to such an extent that they reflect the glory of the Self. The trouble is these sheaths are at present covered with layers of filth and dirt. Further, they are not working in harmony. Perfect harmony of all the parts of the personality is to be established, and for this, purification of the sheaths is necessary. The problem of purifying these becomes more and more difficult as we proceed from the gross to the subtler. The purification process should be extended right up to the causal sheath.

How to do this ? First of all, through self-control we must prevent further accumulation of dirt inside us. Then, through proper discrimination, the existing wrong ideas are to be removed. Finally, through sincere prayer and meditation, we should try to come in touch with the divine Light. When our striving is impelled by intense longing for the Divine, the response comes in the form of divine grace which cleanses the Augean stables of our personality.

*

We should put an end to our present habit of living an impulsive life. Through steady practice, clear thinking, and well co-ordinated actions, we should attain to the purity and innocence that we find in the Buddha, Christ, Ramakrishna. We should become childlike in a higher sense, like these great ones who were consciously in tune with cosmic consciousness. The child is also in tune with it but in an unconscious way. In the child there is still ignorance and darkness; in the Buddha, Christ and Ramakrishna it is all knowledge and light inside.

We grown-ups can have conscious control over our faculties. So we have to transcend the child-state and reach the higher one. The potentiality for becoming spiritual is latent in the child. We should develop that potentiality and attain the fulfilment of the divine promise.

*

If we fail in the attempt to manifest the divinity hidden within us, we have none to blame other than ourselves. We are our own ancestors if in truth we have any such. The soul's history dates back into the beginningless past. We hear so much about heredity and tend to blame our parents for our defects. But what about the soul ? It has no ancestor at all. It is born according to its own predispositions. So we ourselves should take up the responsibility for our faults and shortcomings.

IDENTIFYING MĀYĀ

DR. K. B. RAMAKRISHNA RAO

The concept of māyā is admitted in several systems of Indian philosophy, though not precisely in the same sense. The most significant—albeit highly subjected to criticism—has been the sense in which Advaita uses it. The shape that the concept has taken in Advaita is directly related to the austere way in which the term 'Asolute' is used here. With the type of the Absolute which we have in Advaita, we can never have māyā in any way compromising the 'absoluteness' of the Absolute, either in *being* (that is, as a second real) or in *value* (that is, as important). This means that other Indian systems, which speak of māyā, in the way they do—as 'integral' to the system of the Absolute, have a perspective which is not strictly absolutistic, but may be called theistic or realistic. In the systems which subscribe to these perspectives of the Absolute (that is, as the 'Lord'), māyā is a 'power' of the Lord, who makes use of it in the act of 'creation' (as a material cause), and may be for 'sustaining' what is created (that is, as the 'Will'). It is also the nescience with its power for obscuring (*avidyā*), which sustains the creatures in the way they exist and move about in the 'wheel of *samsāra*'. Thus, in these systems, māyā is a 'real' entity, both as 'power' and as the 'principle of objectivity', and has its 'existence' in addition to the Lord, that is, the Absolute. It is to be noted that its identity or individuality is never attenuated, even though it is subordinated to the Absolute in its serving the Absolute's purpose. Generally, it is the same as the Prakṛti of the Sāṅkhya in being a 'non-spiritual' and 'non-sentient' principle, but with this difference that it has no independence (such as that which the Sāṅkhya ascribes to it) though being ontologically real. In these systems, as in the Sāṅkhya, it is the 'source' of the objective world or the universe.

Advaita concurs with all these systems except in one respect, and it is this which makes all the difference between them both metaphysically and axiologically. For Advaita, māyā is not 'real'. The Real is the Absolute only. According to the intuitions of Advaita, in the system of the Absolute there is no place for other reals, however 'subordinate' they may be either 'materially' or 'functionally'. A subordinate but functionally important being would assume a 'valuational reality', and therefore amount to the condition of a necessary being in the system of the Absolute, thus compromising the being as well as the connotation of it. The pure Being, which is the Absolute, is Non-dual and indivisible Infinite, and does not admit of even degrees of being, in the true sense. Hence whatever status is given to māyā, is of a type which can have reality or value for *thought* only, which fixes or identifies it purely for *practical* purposes, as 'not-Real' (*the* Real being the Absolute only) yet 'not-unreal' (the 'unreal' being the counterpositive of the ideas such as 'a barren woman's son' or 'hare's horns'). If the first denies to māyā absolute reality, the second grants it only a practical or conditional reality, for the reason that it is 'contradictable'; and whatever is contradictable is not real, in the true sense. In its aspect as conditional reality, māyā is the wondrous source of the objective world or of any entity or object of experience which we encounter as 'practically real'. That is, māyā is the ground of all the 'practical' world or experience (which includes experience of the concreteness of 'things', of their duality and multiplicity). If practical and pragmatic philosophies, and positive or natural science

are not prepared to compromise on the 'reality' of the 'practically objective' world, which they encounter in space and time or in the space-time continuum, Advaita does not oppose, but draws their attention to the fact that they are restricting the use of the idea of 'reality' to the relative frame-structure of space and time, wherein the 'objective world' is located. Objects can be 'real' 'practically', and values—scientific, social, pragmatic, moral, etc.—can be relevant. In this sense, Advaita assures them that things need not be taken as 'illusions'.

However, to the religious and spiritual seekers, Advaita has a word to say. What may be 'practically concrete' and 'scientifically relevant', may not be finally true. They are sensuous and empirical. The notions of reality and unreality are not necessarily linked with the notions of existence and non-existence in space and time; the true conception of *sat* (that is, Reality) is beyond these. The definitions of 'reality' and 'unreality' are *not logical or empirical,* but are expressions emanating out of a fundamental non-sensuous intuition of a non-dual, non-relative Real. The Real cannot be defined, but at most indicated, and against the background of it, the 'unreal' is pointed out, and is explained as the creation of mind in the dual and relative structure. Under the illuminations of the fundamental intuition of the Real, *mithyā* (the unreal) is explained as that which fakes a reality but is later sublated; *satya* (the Real) as something not sublated either empirically or ontologically; and *nitya* as something beyond any temporal concept of continuity. Eternality (*nityatva*) is not something material, it is spiritual (of the nature of the Self) and so is identified with 'immortality' (*amṛtatva*) which is the notion of the Self (*ātmatva*). The non-dual being of the Real is never compromised by the longest continuity of the universe. For the so-called *nityatva* or continuity and permanence of the world is temporal and material, but not *spiritual.* Advaita says that the only *being* that can really *be,* is the spiritual entity, the Self (Ātman), and thus relieves it from the ordinary notion of longevity or eternality and points it out as the principle of immortality (*amṛtatva*). *Nityatva* is to be understood in terms of *amṛtatva,* that is, in terms of *ātmatva.*

In ordinary religious and spiritual pursuits, where the comfort and warmth of the world are desired, and one consequently hopes to retain a sense of security of the Self as evidence of one's continuance *in the act of experiencing*—, it is really a material security that one seeks, and *the Self, obviously, does not need it.* From the point of view of true fulfilment (that is, the felicity of Infinite Bliss), the comfort and warmth of the practical world, and the seeming concreteness of scientific objectivity are impediments, which will have to be shed or devalued as one progresses in the endeavour. For the Spiritual, whose realization *is* the fulfilment, is so comprehensively single that the material disappears in its bosom. Or, in its wake, all that is material is transformed into spiritual; it is thus that the intuitions of the Self lead to the profound truth: 'All this verily is Brahman' (*sarvam khalvidam brahma*). Obviously, the retention of māyā, the source of all materiality and relativity, can not be significant in the spiritual pursuit, *even as an accessory,* for the accessory is dissolved in the eternal being of the non-dual Self. It is the perspective of Advaita realization, which warns: *until the spiritual standard is discovered, a scheme of proper valuation even at the empirical level may not be forthcoming,* and we will remain forever in delusion. To evaluate the mundane and the practical as real, or in any way necessary for the Spirit, is subordination of the Spirit—that is, the Real, to something with which it is not related

in any way.

Thus māyā, for Advaita, is a category of thought which is accepted conditionally but not absolutely, and so is described as 'neither Real nor unreal'. It is a category 'described' as 'indescribable' (*anirvacanīya*). We must be clear about the connotation of indescribability thus 'described'. It is not indescribable in the sense that no one can communicate its nature, but in the sense that, taken independently, māyā is not 'self-explanatory' or self-describable in terms of its ontological existence. It is falsehood, and what is false depends on or requires the support of a self-sustaining truth. No one accepts falsehood as falsehood. One accepts it as truth, that is, one is mistaking it for truth. And so, falsehood gets currency till the mistake wears out. It cashes in on it while the going is good.

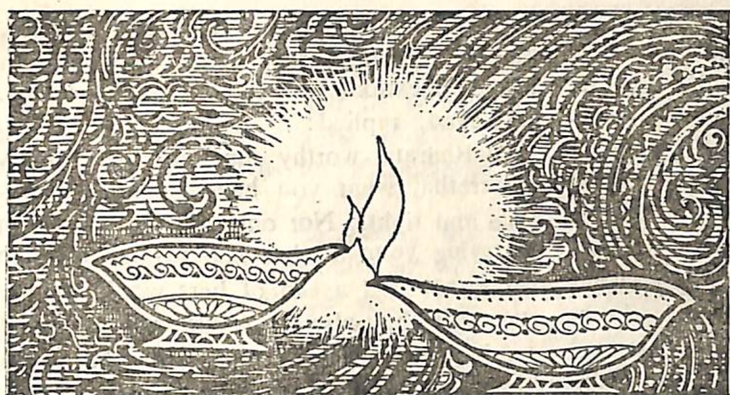
If this is all there is to the so-called indescribable, namely māyā, the really indescribable is that which passes beyond one's capacity to verbally describe or even indicate. Such is the Absolute; and all verbal description is limited to the empirical. The Absolute is *anirdeśyam* (which cannot be indicated), *agrāhyam* (incomprehensible), *acintyam* (unthinkable), etc. This is its a-cosmic nature, transcending or baffling all assertions about it either positive or negative.

As a category, thus, of describably indescribable being, māyā is evidenced in life as what is commonly understood to constitute 'experience', whereas the *really* indescribable falls without or transcends all such experience. As its impact is not denied, in so far as life is concerned māyā is not fanciful, and so has a 'practical concreteness'. But it is rejected as a 'fiction' so soon as a more practically concrete experience begins to have its impact. That is how what is now 'real' is thrown off later as unreal. We are amazed at such 'objects of experience' and say, 'How indescribably true they seemed', or 'How describably untrue they are!' We reject them as not having a sustained value, though experienced at one level of our being—namely, the empirical. And with their rejection, our 'security' founded on their being, is necesssarily shaken. Māyā thus is a category which disturbs our logical composure, though being only a creation of thought, even as it disturbs our empirical equanimity although—having been experientially accepted for a time, perhaps in the effort to find a certain sense of reality—it is finally to be denounced as a fiction. This can readily be shown to be experiential evidence that we had mistaken a fiction for a fact, an unreality for a reality.

In such instances of mistaking something to be real but later finding it was only 'passing' as real (e.g., the rope-snake, shell-silver, etc.), what is primarily important is not how the mistake arose, but simply the very fact of mistaking. In all attempts at explanation of 'illusion', what is missed is the *fact* of illusion. The mistake is experiential and existential, if one may call it so; and we need not deny it in that sense. Māyā, the category of 'neither Real nor unreal', has thus a factual reference, and all theories of illusion follow later as simple rationalizations regarding the *how* of it, but not the *why* of it. It is the knowledge of the latter which eliminates (or puts one on the way to eliminating) the occurrence of illusion or the mistake.

In this regard another important point is to be noted. The realm of mistaking is not in any way comparable to the realm of the Truth. Advaita says about this latter realm, not only that no mistake occurs, but that there cannot even be a mistaking agent. And so, from this position, Advaita modifies the meaning of the terms we commonly use with the hope of giving them a 'self-evident' value or authenticity—namely, 'experiential' or 'existential'. We forget that Truth is, strictly speaking, not *experienced*.

(*Continued on p.* 431)



ILLUMINATING DIALOGUES FROM INDIAN LORE

RĀMA'S STAUNCHNESS TO TRUTH AND BHARATA'S LOVE FOR HIS BROTHER

In the edge of forest, on the hill of Citrakūṭa, Bharata had searched out Śrī Rāma's hermitage, and with his three queen-mothers, brother Śatrughna, the sage Vasiṣṭha and others, had fervently requested Rāma to return to the throne of Ayodhyā. But despite all appeals and despite what would to any ordinary mortal be the most glittering temptations, Rāma showed no least sign of wavering from his high resolve to carry out his father's wishes and fulfil his vow to Kaikeyī that Bharata would succeed to the throne. Finally he had raised the whole question to the highest level of devotion to one's own dharma, regardless of consequences even to loved ones. Still, Bharata, undaunted, rejoined on the same level:

Indeed, who can equal you in this world, O tamer of foes? Neither can sorrow torment nor joy exhilarate you. ... The man to whom life and death are viewed alike, as well as gain and loss in this life—who knows the self as well as the non-self—cannot be moved even in this adversity. O scion of Raghu, you know all and see all and are ever true to your vows; you are aware of the motives of men's actions and of their abandoning them—hence even the most unbearable afflictions do not at all disturb you.

The sin committed by my mother (of demanding your exile) while I was away from Ayodhyā, greatly afflicts me. [Consider my dharma also] and be gracious! I am bound by the fetters of morality (forbidding injury to a woman); hence I do not kill my sinful mother on the spot. That would ill become one of the righteous line of King Daśaratha. Nor do I wish to denounce our father in open assembly, since he was very good and pious and was a veritable deity to me; yet what man who was so well acquainted with the moral law, could commit such a wrong, conducive neither to dharma nor worldly prosperity, just to please a woman? There is an ancient adage, that at the approach of death man invariably loses his power of judgment; and the king has indeed illustrated this to the world! Through whatever sort of reasons he acted thus, still you are not bound by such a deed.

A son who mends the arrant transgressions of his father is accounted a true son indeed. This action of our father's is unanimously condemned as immoral by the wise. Therefore do grant my prayer and save my mother Kaikeyī, myself, our friends and relations, and all the people of this country from the consequences of that. [Even father himself will have to suffer less

if the injustice is thus smoothed over.]

Again, how can you reconcile your duty as a kṣatriya with this forest-life and its matted locks? How can you now do anything for the protection of your people? The first duty of a kṣatriya (of kingly rank) is to get himself installed as king, where he is best able to protect the people. Neglecting thus a duty yielding visible joy, what kṣatriya would embrace one which is cheerless, of doubtful result which at best can come only in the hereafter? If you desire hardship for its own sake, why not seek it through the hard labour of justly ruling the four castes? And the sages definitely declare the dharma of the householder to be the noblest of all (as upon him depend all others): why then do you abandon it?

Compared with you, I am like a child, poor in understanding and virtues, as well as in rank. I cannot even live without you, what to speak of ruling in your stead! Therefore, O virtuous one, do accept the unopposed rule of this great kingdom, according to the prescribed code of conduct. The great sage Vasiṣṭha is here, with all the ministers and priests: now permit yourself to be crowned and return with us to Ayodhyā. Thus you can discharge the threefold obligations—to the gods, the *ṛṣis* (sages and teachers), and the ancestors—by offering oblations, studying the scriptures, and rearing children. Let your friends rejoice today on your coronation, and your enemies flee in all directions! Wash away the guilt attaching to me as well as to my mother, O Jewel of men, and save our revered father also from remorse! With bowed head I implore you to take pity on me as well as all your kinsfolk even as Lord Śiva does on all beings. But if still you are adamant and think of going even deeper into the forest, I too shall follow you there.

At this, when Śrī Rāma showed no least sign of changing his resolve, the assembled multitude marvelled at his faithfulness, yet wept at the prospect of his long absence. Praising Bharata, they joined earnestly in his supplications to Śrī Rāma. Still Rāma, unmoved, replied:

O Bharata, worthy son of the mighty Daśaratha, what you have said is reasonable and right. Not only did our father, in marrying your mother Kaikeyī, promise to her father that a son of hers would be his successor, but also in return for her great services in the war between gods and *asuras* (demons), he promised her two boons. As due result of these two, he granted her the rulership for you, and exile for me. Determined to prove the veracity of father's word, I, who am unrivalled, have come as he enjoined, to this lonely forest for fourteen years. O ruler of kings, you too should obey his words and vindicate his truthfulness by occupying the throne immediately. For my sake, too, exonerate our father from the debt (he owes Kaikeyī), protecting his fair name and delighting your mother.

O my dear brother, a son is said to be one who saves his father from hell ... Thus have all the royal sages believed. Therefore, O gallant Bharata, return with all these your people to Ayodhyā to protect the nation: be you the ruler there and I too shall be the emperor, of wild beasts. You return joyfully thither and I will cheerfully proceed further into the forest.

Let the (royal) umbrella protect you from the hot sun; I shall seek such shelter in the dense forest-shadows. Let Śatrughna of peerless wisdom attend you, and the illustrious prince Lakṣmaṇa be my chief friend. Thus shall we, his four worthy sons, enable King Daśaratha to be established in truth. Grieve no more.

At this point, deeming Bharata in need of support, the eminent sage Jābāli came forward with elaborate arguments based on atheistic materialism and hedonism, which Rāma swept aside in quite harsh language, bringing Jābāli to confess that he was only

acting a part, in the attempt to bring Rāma back.[1] Finally the great sage Vasiṣṭha, the guru of the kingly brothers, felt he should make a supreme appeal. First speaking sweetly of Jābāli's motives for play-acting, he continued:

O Sovereign, hear from me about the creation of the world. In beginning all was water; from that element the earth was formed; after this the self-born Brahmā and other gods appeared. Appearing as the Divine Boar, Brahmā then lifted the earth out of the water, and with his sons (Marīci and others) of subdued minds, evolved the whole universe. Marīci's son was Kaśyapa; from him was born Vivaswat, and from Vivaswat, Manu, the first among the Prajāpatis (lords of creation). To his son Ikṣwāku, Manu allotted the whole world; and Ikṣwāku became the first king of Ayodhyā.

Continuing, Vasiṣṭha outlined the noble line of the kings of Ayodhyā as far as king Daśaratha, and concluded:

In the dynasty of Ikṣwāku, the eldest son always succeeds to the throne: while he lives, none else can become king. It is not proper for you to violate this time-honoured tradition of the House of Raghu. O Great One, reign over this earth filled with treasures, as did your father!

O Rāma, from the time a man is born into this world, he must revere his father, his mother, and his spiritual preceptor. But the father only procreates and the mother brings forth, a human being; the preceptor bestows on him wisdom, and hence is spoken of as Guru, superior even to the parents. Now I am the preceptor not only of yourself but also your father: to do my bidding therefore can surely not be transgression. See all these your kinsmen, learned brāhmaṇas, and citizens of Ayodhyā: to discharge your duty by them can surely not be transgression. Here is your virtuous and aged mother: to follow her bidding can surely not be transgression. To grant the prayer of Bharata can surely not be swerving from the path of dharma, O brave scion of Raghu!

Yet to this appeal from highest authority, Śrī Rāma replied:

The service that the parents render their son, from childhood, giving him food and beautiful attire, putting him comfortably to bed, rubbing his body with oil, speaking always kindly to him, with gentle counsels, striving only for his ultimate good—all these cannot be easily recompensed. Therefore the commands of my father, who brought me into being, shall not be set aside.

Then Bharata, perceiving all arguments futile, sorrowfully bade the faithful Sumantra (their charioteer):

Spread here some blades of *kuśa* (a tall-growing grass, used in sacrifices etc.) on the ground. I shall place myself at the door of my elder brother until he be fully propitiated and grant my request. Like a destitute brāhmaṇa (to whom a debtor defaulted on his just debt) I shall lie at the door of his hut without food or drink, with my face covered with a cloth, until he consents to return to his capital.

Since Sumantra awaited the commands of Śrī Rāma, Bharata with his own hands spread the mat of *kuśa*, and sat thereon. To him then Śrī Rāma spoke:

What wrong have I done, that you should sit at my door to exert pressure on me, my darling? A brāhmana indeed may adopt such a means towards his oppressor; but a kṣatriya—what to speak of a crowned head—should never think of such a thing. O tiger among men, arise, giving up this terrible vow, and straightway return to the great capital, Ayodhyā.

Bharata, afflicted yet resolute, looked

[1] For the dialogue between the sage Jābāli and Śrī Rāma, please refer to the *Prabuddha Bharata*, May 1971.—*Ed.*

around him at the assembled people of the capital as well as rural areas: 'Why do you not plead with my elder brother?'

But they felt obliged to reply:

We know well that you speak aright to Śrī Rāma. Yet that highly blessed prince also abides sincerely by his father's command. Thus (we truly feel) we will not be able to divert him from his purpose.

And Rāma quickly followed this lead:

Listen to these words of our friends, devoted to righteousness, and having heard both theirs and mine, weigh them fully, O scion of Raghu! Then arise, and touch water, as well as touching myself—as indication of your resolve to break the vow you have just taken.

So, Bharata arose and touched water; but still undaunted, rejoined:

Let all hear me! Never did I beg sovereignty of my father nor ask my mother to do so for me. I knew nothing about the exile of Śrī Rāma [as Bharata was out of Ayodhyā at the time]. He knows best what is right; if our father's behest must be carried out and if one must live fourteen years in the forest, I myself shall do that.

Astonished at his brother's stern resolution, yet never himself swerving from dharma (which was his soul), Śrī Rāma thoughtfully replied:

Friends, whatever was sold, pledged, or bought by our father in his lifetime, can by no means be nullified by either me or Bharata. Nor can I send any proxy into exile: it would be a great offence (inasmuch as a proxy is allowed only if one is unable himself to discharge an obligation). I have already said in detail how reasonable was Kaikeyī's demand and how virtuous was our father's decision to grant her boons. I know Bharata to be forgiving by nature, reverent to the elders, and a lover of truth. And I now declare that when my forest-exile is ended I shall accept the sovereignty and govern with him.

O Bharata, I have discharged the one boon granted Kaikeyī by the king, and vindicated his honour. Do you now liberate him from the charge of falsehood and redeem that other boon.

The great sages assembled there were astonished and delighted at the privilege of witnessing this meeting of the two noble souls. Together with hosts of others who were invisible, they praised and blessed the royal brothers, whose (elevating) dialogue they still wished to hear again and again. Then those many *ṛṣis* (sages) who desired that for the universal welfare Rāvaṇa should be killed (which Rāma alone could do) unitedly approached Bharata:

O high-born Prince, do not disregard the advice of Śrī Rāma if you have the least regard for your father. It is because of Daśaratha's discharging his obligations to your mother, that he ascended to heaven; now we wish to see Śrī Rāma absolved from his remaining obligations to his father.

At these auspicious words, Rāma's face became brighter and he joyfully extolled these *ṛṣis*. Bharata, though trembling from this added blow to his hopes, made a last appeal:

O Rāma, considering your sacred obligation (of ruling and protecting the people of Ayodhyā) in accord with our family traditions, you surely ought to grant my prayer which is also your mother Kausalyā's. I cannot single-handed protect this vast dominion, nor please its populace who are so devoted to you. They all await you as eagerly as the husbandman does the rumbling rainclouds.

And Bharata fell at Rāma's feet, adding even further endearing entreaties.

But Rāma, raising and embracing him, reassured him thus:

You can very well protect even the earth —what to speak of Ayodhyā—through this wisdom, born of humility, now dawned on

you! And with your ministers, friends, and wise counsellors, the greatest problems can be solved. The moon may sooner lose its brilliance, the Himalayas their snows, or the ocean overspread its shores, than I violate the plighted word of my father. My darling, it is not for you to determine whether your mother acted from affection for you or greed of sovereignty through you: it is for you to behave towards her just as is natural to a son.

[At last Bharata's inspired imagination brought solace to all.] To Rāma he said: 'Pray step on this pair of wooden sandals adorned with gold, since (soon) these will be the world's only means of support and protection.' This Rāma did, and then gave the sandals to Bharata, who, bowing reverently to the sandals, resumed:

Having thus consigned the burden of kingship to the sandals, O gallant brother, I shall live these fourteen years alone, wearing matted locks and a robe of bark, eating fruits and roots, dwelling outside the city, awaiting your return. And if when the fourteenth year of your exile ends, I do not then see you, the following day I shall enter the fire once for all.

'So be it!' replied Rāma, embracing Bharata again, and also Śatrughna. 'Take care of mother Kaikeyī; be not angry with her. You are thus adjured by me as well as Sītā!'

Thus, with eyes filled with tears, Rāma bade his brothers farewell.

Source: Vālmīki's *Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇam,* II. Cantos 106-12; and *Kalyāṇa-Kalpataru,* Dec. 1963.

(*Continued from p.* 426)

It is above the realm of objectivity and relativity wherein 'one experiences another'. It is relationless in terms of experience, experiencing or experiencer. The entire philosophy of Advaita is oriented to identifying this mistake, or the realm of mistaking, and warning against it—*standing on a ground which does not fall within that realm.* That ground—which is relationless yet making for all relations, which is transexperiential yet making for all experiences—is the principle of the Self, under the illuminations of which Advaita evaluates and validates 'experienced facts', as it also invalidates 'fictions' within the conditioned realm of being.

This is the clue to the disposing of a common criticism levelled against Advaita when it speaks of māyā, namely, that it *requires* māyā to maintain the non-dualism (*advitīyatva*) of the Absolute. But the truth is, māyā is not required for explaining the empirical plurality and realism, but that *māyā is identified as the reason for mistaking the nature of* Reality or the Absolute *as* any sort of pluralism whatever. The 'thief' is identified and exposed, as it were, but is not made use of to protect the indivisible infinity of being. Māyā is shown to have built up a natural habit in us of taking the many for the One, the finite for the Infinite, or in short the empirically real for the finally real. It is identified as such, as the agency of delusion, and this identification is done on the self-evident foundation of the intuition of the non-dual Self—Ātman, or Brahman—which is the final truth.

SOME SIGNIFICANT TEACHINGS OF THE *BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ*

DR. S. N. L. SHRIVASTAVA

> 'Every day one should recite (from) the Gītā and the thousand names of Viṣṇu, while constantly meditating on Him. One should ever lead the mind to seek the company of the good and the holy; one should give away one's wealth in charity to the poor and the needy.' [1] — Śrī Śaṅkarācārya.

In the verse quoted above, Śrī Śaṅkara suggests that the recitation of the *Gītā* is an important duty which ought not to be neglected. Every reader of the *Bhagavad-gītā* knows that the holy book is followed at the end by what is known as the '*Gītā-māhātmyam* (The Greatness of the *Gītā*), being a panegyric on the excellences of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, attributed to the sage Vyāsa. Lest one should neglect it as a sheer sentimental eulogy, it is laid down in the *Māhātmyam* itself that 'One who has read the *Gītā* but not the *Māhātmyam*, has read it in vain. His reading is a sheer waste of energy.' [2] Again, in the *Māhātmyam*: 'There is none baser than one who does not understand the meaning of the *Gītā*.' [3] So dynamic and invigorating is the message of the *Gītā* that 'The dying man uttering the word "Gītā" will attain the goal.' [4]

'Who can describe the incomparable greatness', it has been asked, 'of the *Gītā*? Kṛṣṇa alone knows it in its fullness, Arjuna a fragment of it; having heard about it, sages like Vyāsa, Śuka, Yājñavalkya, and Janaka discourse on little bits of it.' [5]

Is all this panegyric of the *Gītā* justified, or, an exaggerated laudation of a popular religious book? *Prima facie,* the latter view seems to be the correct one and in my earlier days I held the same view. But after years of experience and better understanding of the *Gītā*, the conviction is increasingly growing in me that not a whit of the panegyric is exaggerated: all is justified and well-deserved. This is what I propose to show in the present article, pin-pointing certain cardinal teachings of the *Gītā* which justify its claim to uniqueness and the highest veneration given to it.

I

There are scriptures and sacred books by scores, both in the East and the West, but there is something unique about the *Bhagavad-gītā*, something assuredly not to be found elsewhere. This is not to under-rate other scriptures, but simply to accentuate the fact that the *Gītā* teaches us certain lessons not taught anywhere else. The *Gītā* is said to contain the quintessence of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads. Certainly it does. But we should be failing in giving the *Gītā* its due if we took it as a simple summary or digest of the Vedic and the Upaniṣadic principles and teachings. Its original contribution consists in showing how these principles could be applied in life, in all walks of life, by men in all stations of life

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[1] गेयं गीतानामसहस्रं ध्येयं श्रीपतिरूपमजस्रम् ।
नेयं सज्जनसङ्गे चित्तं देयं दीनजनाय च वित्तम् ॥

[2] गीतायाः पठनं कृत्वा माहात्म्यं नैव यः पठत् ।
वृथा पाठफलं तस्य श्रम एव ह्युदाहृतः ॥

[3] गीतार्थं नावजानाति नाधमस्तत्परो जनः ।

[4] गीतेत्युच्चारसंयुक्तो म्रियमाणो गतिं लभेत् ।

[5] शक्यते केन वै वक्तुं गीतामाहात्म्यमुत्तमम् ।
कृष्णो जानाति वै सम्यक्किञ्चित्कुन्तीसुतः फलम् ॥
व्यासो वा व्यासपुत्रो वा याज्ञवल्क्योऽथ मैथिलः ।
अन्ये श्रवणतः श्रुत्वा लेशं संकीर्तयन्ति च ॥

and at all stages of spiritual development. The *Gītā,* through its wonderful doctrine of karma-yoga, has shown, as no other scripture has done, how even the secular life, far from being forsaken, can be spiritualized, even unto the highest perfection. One who has even a nodding acquaintance with the *Bhagavad-gītā* knows that it is a 'gospel of activism'; but its activism is often misunderstood. By some, mere activity is taken to be karma-yoga. Nothing could be farther from truth. Only karma performed in the spirit of yoga—or *as yoga*—is karma-yoga. Karma, performed in the spirit of selfless dedication to God and society, in the spirit of *yajña* (*yajñāyācaratah karma*) or a sacramental offering to the Divine, is karma-yoga properly so called. Otherwise the smuggler and the burglar, the robber and the murderer, the hack politician who works only for power and pelf, and the miser who spends all his energy in earning and hoarding, would all be karma-yogins!

The *Gītā* is not all mysticism nor all metaphysics, neither all ethics or psychology or social philosophy, but a harmonious blending of all these in a complete philosophy of life. It is *sarvaśāstramayī* (embodiment of all scriptures); and that as the *Māhātmyam* says is its distinctive feature, its uniqueness.[6]

The *Gītā* does not advocate any violent break with nature; it commends utilizing the currents of nature in order to reach beyond them. Ruthless repression of one's natural propensities is futile. Everyone is bound by his natural, his psycho-physical make-up, his *svabhāva.* In vain may one try to take up an action or a vocation contrary to his or her *svabhāva.*[7] *Svabhāva* differs from individual to individual according to the proportional combination of *guṇas* (qualities) in their psycho-physical nature. A line of action taken up by a person with a lower *svabhāva* may be defective from the point of view of a person with a higher *svabhāva,* but that is no reason why the former should abandon it. All undertakings, says the *Gītā,* are attended with imperfections, like fire covered with smoke.[8] When fire is first ignited there is smoke but when the flame flares up, the smoke disappears. Be not disheartened, says the *Gītā.* By cultivating an attitude of detachment to the fruits of action, the defect can eventually be removed or will disappear of itself like the disappearing of the smoke on the flaring up of the fire.[9] Through *karma* to *naiṣkarmya* (actionlessness), and not through the renunciation of *karma*—that is the unique teaching of the *Gītā.*

There is no sin in doing an action or taking up a vocation determined by one's *svabhāva.*[10] One's *svabhāva* determines one's *svakarma,* the action or vocation for which nature has made him. *Svakarma* done with a sense of sacred duty towards the social whole to which he belongs (*lokasaṅgraha*), is his *svadharma* (one's own duty). The doctrine of realizing the *lokasaṅgraha* or the collective welfare of the society or the nation through the dedicated performance of one's *svadharma,* is the grandest ethical teaching of the *Bhagavad-gītā.* The importance of this doctrine for a developing nation like India cannot be overemphasized. The *Gītā* recognizes the fact of the diversity of capacities and talents

6 सर्वशास्त्रमयी यस्मात्तस्माद्गीता विशिष्यते ।

7 *vide Gītā,* XVIII. 60

8 ibid., XVIII. 48

9 By logically following up the smoke-fire analogy here, the learned author, it seems to us, is making a point that is his own, and not hinted or supported by the *Gītā.* Through cultivation of the spirit of detachment, the defects inhering in all actions cease to affect the subject or agent, and thus the actions become helpful in his spiritual evolution. But, objectively speaking, at no time do defects cease to be attendant to actions, which are born of *prakṛti* or the *guṇas.* —*Ed.*

10 ibid., XVIII. 47

and points out that all are needed for the collective welfare of the social whole. The saint and the soldier, the teacher and the technician, the agriculturist and the industrialist, the statesman and the administrator, even the unskilled labourer—all are needed, and each can benefit the society by his dedicated service to it. All cannot be regimented for a single task or vocation; nor can one excel in a task which is not his *svadharma* or even a task which is congruent with his psycho-physical make-up but which is a *paradharma* (duty of another). The principle of *cāturvarṇya* (the fourfold caste system), grossly perverted though it has been into a hereditary caste system, is a scientific and psychological division of society into four basic types in accordance with the natural endowments and propensities of individuals—*guṇakarmavibhāgaśaḥ*, as the *Gītā* puts it. 'The vocations of brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas, vaiśyas, and the śūdras, O Arjuna,' says Śrī Kṛṣṇa, 'have been divided by the *guṇas* born of their own nature.'[11] In the verses that follow, the description of the duties of each *varṇa* ends with the words *karma svabhāvajam* (duties born of their own nature).

It is high time that we understood the real meaning and purpose of *cāturvarṇya,* and stopped equating it with what is understood as 'casteism' with its pernicious ideas of the high-born and the low-born. 'The wise', says the *Gītā,* 'are those who look with same-sightedness on the brāhmaṇa endowed with learning and humility, on the cow and the elephant, and on the dog and the outcaste.'[12] Where is the room for narrow ideas of the high and the low in such a teaching? And what other scripture ever so eloquently pleaded for same-sightedness, not only towards all humans, but towards all living beings?

(*To be concluded*)

11 ibid., XVIII. 41
12 ibid., V. 18

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS NUMBER

Reminiscences are taken from: 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 600004, 1947), and Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master* (Madras, 1970). References: *Gospel:* No. 1, p. 236; No. 4, p. 200; No. 5, p. 341; No. 6, p. 330; No. 7, p. 357. *Great Master:* No. 2 & 3, pp. 513-4.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever!' are from *The Complete Works,* Vol. VII (1958), pp. 64-5.

The popularity that the *Gītā* and *Caṇḍī* enjoy among the Hindus is almost entirely due to their philosophical profundity and their ability to illuminate the paths of *sādhanā* (spiritual practice). Though these two holy books are so often studied separately, their comparative study is seldom made. Undoubtedly, it is a vast subject, and a magazine article affords inadequate scope for doing it justice. However, we have made an attempt in this month's editorial essay by taking up a few of their basic features; and we hope our readers will welcome this study in this month when

the Divine Mother will be worshipped by millions of Hindus throughout India and beyond.

Even the desire for liberation, or that for loving God and God alone, say the spiritual teachers of all religious traditions, is a result of God's grace. Persistence in seeking God and a final divine realization are also results of divine grace. But then self-effort, like an active catalyst, makes grace potent and fruitful. St. Bernard of Clairvaux (A.D. 1090-1153), the 'Mellifluous Doctor', has expressed the idea beautifully: 'Grace is necessary for salvation, free will equally so—but grace in order to give salvation, free will in order to receive it. Therefore we should not attribute part of the good work to grace and part to free will; it is performed in its entirety by the common and inseparable action of both; entirely by grace, entirely by free will, but springing from the first in the second.'

In this month's 'Essay on Applied Religion', Swami Budhananda discusses the theme of divine grace, with appropriate quotes from the *Gītā* and from Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples. The second part of the essay will appear in our next issue.

'Tagore—Some Aspects of His Consciousness', by Sri Kalyan Sen, is an informative study of Rabindranath Tagore's poetical consciousness as revealed in some of his poems and songs. Quoting profusely from the mystical writings of Sri Aurobindo, side by side with Tagore's compositions, the author tries to show how the poet's consciousness finds entry to the supernal realms of the mystical, which are inaccessible to the common man. Sri Kalyan Sen is an Electronics Engineer, based in Patna (Bihar), India.

The greatest problem encountered by a philosopher of the Advaita or non-dualistic school of Vedānta, is how to account for the phenomenal universe side by side with the formless, nameless, non-dual Absolute. Nevertheless, Śaṅkara has boldly tackled this problem and solved it through his theory of māyā and *adhyāsa* (superimposition). The Absolute, while remaining unchanged, appears as the phenomenal universe through the medium of māyā. Māyā is real yet not real. It is real in so far as it conjures up the perceptible world on the substratum of the Absolute. It is unreal since the knowledge or realization of the Absolute destroys the perception of multiplicity and its mother, māyā, root and branch. 'Identifying Māyā', by Dr. K. B. Ramakrishna Rao, is a scholarly paper in which the author discusses the theme of māyā from the standpoint of Advaita, in contradistinction to its features as viewed by other schools of Indian philosophy. Dr. Ramakrishna Rao is head of the department of Hindu Philosophy, University of Mysore.

In 'Some Significant Teachings of the *Bhagavad-gītā*', Dr. S. N. L. Shrivastava, writing with deep conviction born of devoted study for many years, spotlights the *Gītā's* uniqueness, and some of its outstanding teachings. He discusses in this issue's first instalment, especially the teachings relating to *svadharma* and *lokasaṅgraha*. Dr. Shrivastava is Professor of Philosophy (Retd.), Vikram University, Ujjain, India, and is one of our long-standing and distinguished contributors.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

GOD AS MOTHER—A FEMININE THEOLOGY IN INDIA: BY CHEEVER MACKENZIE BROWN, Published by Claude Stark & Co., Hartford, Vermont, 05047, U.S.A., 1974, pp. xvii+264, Price $ 15.00.

The Godhead has been viewed in India in a variety of forms through the ages. Many people treat God in the masculine gender. But, again, many consider the ultimate Reality as a Goddess. The idea of the ultimate Reality as a Mother has been a most ancient one in India. The *Taittiriya-upanishad* not only says *pitridevo bhava,* but *matridevo bhava.* Almost all the sacred shrines in India have a prominent place for the Mother-Goddess.

In the present text Dr. Brown presents a careful, detailed examination of the *Brahma-vaivarta-purana,* which centres round the Radha-Krishna cult. The various existing non-Indian religions till now have had almost entirely a masculine theology, with God as Father. Even Jesus said, 'I and my Father are one', and is not known to have ever referred to God as Mother. Only in India have devotees been able to say, 'I and my Mother are one'. This year has been proclaimed the International Women's Year. As the saying of Manu goes, *'yatra naryastu pujyante, ramante tatra devatah'*—'Where the women are worshipped, there the gods delight'. A respect for womanhood adds a fresh dimension to personal piety.

The cult of the Mother-Goddess, moreover, was not unknown in the ancient West. Athene in Greece, Ishtar in Babylon, and others were widely and long known. Among Christians, the Catholics have increasingly stressed the 'Mediatrix', although the Protestants have tended to minimize Her, to their own loss. Meanwhile, as Prof. Ingalls of Harvard University well notes in the Foreword, almost all the ancient goddesses have been replaced by male deities. Yet in India the Goddess has reasserted Herself. The Sankhya system was influential in this direction; later the Tantras added greatly. Even Manju Sri of the Buddhists later on became a Goddess. Of course, Ingalls' remark (p. xvi) that 'Sometimes ... the Goddess casts her partner into the shade', may be hyperbolic. Siva and *Sakti* (Power) are one. Siva, the Absolute, is immoveable like a 'corpse', and in the phrase of Sri Sankara in his *Saundarya-lahari,* it is only when combined with His *Sakti* that He can move and create.

Dr. Brown avoids eclecticism: 'He looks at the whole picture. He lets the text speak for itself ....'. And when he interprets, it is done faithfully. For one born in a Christian missionary family, presently teaching in the Department of Religion and Philosophy of a Trinity College, and with no apparent association with Hindu teachers, the above is a notable achievement. His book is in eleven chapters, dealing with all the important problems covered by the Purana. The appendices, index and glossary are valuable. The book is dedicated to the author's parents whom he considers to be true *amsas* (parts or manifestations) of Radha and Krishna. It is a pity that no Indian has been able to produce such a devoted work on this subject. It is a profound study, and deserves to be read by all who are interested in the Brahmanical religion.

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STUDIES IN EAST-WEST PHILOSOPHY: BY DR. G. SRINIVASAN, Published by Arnold-Heinemann Publishers (India) Pvt. Ltd., AB/9 Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi 110016, 1974 pp. 111, Price Rs. 25/-.

This is a collection of 19 philosophical papers contributed by the author to various journals at various times. The author is well read in the existentialist literature and it is his keen appreciation of the existentialist point of view which he brings to bear on the problems discussed by him in these essays. Some of the papers are concerned with the nature of the self and the method of knowing it, some with morality, and some are comparative studies such as, Sankhya and Sartre, Sankhya and Spinoza, Ramanuja and Spinoza, and Advaita Vedanta and Heidegger.

To summarize all the essays is impossible within the span of this review; hence I shall take note of only some of them.

In the first essay, 'On Knowing a Person', the author, like all ardent existentialists, stresses the point that it was existentialism in the history of Western philosophical thought which first brought to light the true nature of man in his subjectivity and freedom as well as in his involvement in the world, his being-in-the-world. The method appropriate to self-knowledge is introspection, while that

appropriate to the knowledge of other persons is communication.

In the second essay 'Person and Thing', the author has clearly explained the distinction of a person as a self-conscious dynamic being from a thing as a fixed and finished object in space and time. In fact, it is its protest against the reification of man to which the phenomenal success of modern science and technology is driving mankind, that is responsible for the growing popularity of existentialism in our times. But we feel what is not realized with sufficient clarity is this, that the existentialist concept of freedom, particularly that of Sartre, is precarious for ethics, what to speak of religion.

The most essential characteristic of man is freedom, and this freedom, as the author points out, consists in his choice of values: 'A choice of values implies ethical freedom, which is the core of authentic human existence'. (p. 11)

It may be pointed out that according to Sartre man does not so much *choose* his values as *make* or *create* them. Sartre denies outright the pre-existence of any realm of eternal values and of a moral ideal or norms of conduct in the absence of which the sense of responsibility also becomes meaningless. I am glad the author has hit on this point in the closing lines of his 14th essay, Sankhya and Sartre:

'The non-admission of God and the absence of any fixed, pre-determined transcendent ethical goal like the Sankhyan are regarded by him [Sartre] as necessary conditions of man's "authentic" existence. But a system of philosophy built on this anti-metaphysical pre-supposition yields only a purposeless, unintelligible universe, and this is the outcome of Sartre's philosophy, as admitted by himself'. (p. 78)

In the 15th essay, the author has attempted a comparison between Sankhya and Spinoza. This comparison seems to me rather far-fetched.

The 17th essay, Advaita Vedanta and Heidegger, is interesting all through.

This is a thoughtful volume and will prove interesting and useful to all students of philosophy, particularly to those interested in existentialism.

The printing and get-up are good.

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SOME CONCEPTS OF INDIAN CULTURE: BY PROF. N. A. NIKAM, Published by Indian Institute for Advanced Study, Simla, 171005, 2nd Edition 1973, pp. xii+74, Price Rs. 18/-.

This is the second, enlarged, edition of this book within six years. That a book on Indian culture should receive a second edition so soon is itself a testimony to its value, even if the price is excessive.

Two of the chief characteristics of Indian culture have been its persistence and its self-renewal. There is still much that is living and vital in Indian culture. The late Prof. Nikam explains the Indian ideas concerning life and death, and shows that these ideas have influenced our thought, life, and history. In a lucid manner, he explains the ideas that have been for ages governing Indian culture. These ideas are purely Indian, and yet universal. First he examines the Components of Indian culture. Next he takes up the Concepts: Sacrifice, Truth and the Idea of the Good, the Law of Karma, Ahimsa, Maya and Lila, Avatara, Purushartha (values of life), Atman, and Karma Yoga. The presentation is very stimulating. The book deserves to be read by everyone interested in Indian culture.

DR. P. S. SASTRI

THE HUMAN EXILE: BY BELA FISCHER, Published by Philosophical Library, New York City, 1974, pp. 185, Price $ 6.00.

Having gone through the dark periods of alienation of people from people, under the Nazi regime, the author who is a Jewish rabbi, is keenly interested in the problem of human divisiveness and the solution for it. He analyses the factors which have led to the intensification of this sense of separateness of man from man, of group from group, and comes to the conclusion that only a sincere cultivation of universal thinking, feeling and action can effect a breakthrough. He discusses how each person can make a beginning towards this change of human nature by stressing elements of love, mutuality and common progression in all sectors of life—individual, collective, national and world-wide. The writing is sincere and argument unexceptionable.

SRI M. P. PANDIT
Sri Aurobindo Ashrama
Pondicherry

GUIDANCE FROM SRI AUROBINDO—LETTERS TO A YOUNG DISCIPLE: BY NAGIN DOSHI, Published by Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry, India, 1974, pp. 285, Price Rs. 16/-.

This book is a collection of extracts from the

correspondence between the author and Sri Aurobindo. Except for some additions of a later date, the present selection covers only the years 1933-34. In his correspondence the author has put many a question to Sri Aurobindo, chiefly on points concerning the inner life and experiences, and the difficulties of the *sadhaka* (spiritual aspirant) in the path of Yoga; and Sri Aurobindo has pointedly answered them.

The book covers a whole constellation of topics, ranging from illness, sexual thoughts and impulses, and dreams, to supramental yoga, planes of higher knowledge, and the meaning of Avatarahood, among others.

The central message of Sri Aurobindo that emerges from perusal of this book, is this—that one should open up one's whole being to the influence of the Mother's Force which is ever operative and which, according to Sri Aurobindo, is working towards the fulfilment on this earth of hitherto unachieved ends.

The printing and general get-up are good; still the price seems to us a bit high for the size of the book.

Dr. S. N. L. Shrivastava

BENGALI

SRI-MA DARSHAN: By Swami Nityatmananda, Published by Sri Ramakrishna Sri Ma Prakashan Trust, 579 Sector 18B, Chandigarh, Vol. XIV, 1974, pp. 295, Price Rs. 12/-.

This is the penultimate volume of the *Sri-Ma Darshan* series, already known, we hope, to the readers of this review section. The volume continues the spiritual discourses of Sri Ma (Mahendranath Gupta), the renowned householder disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, as recorded by the author. This volume's special attraction is that it enables readers to see how the real benefit of a pilgrimage can be gained by earnest pilgrims. Important places in Puri, the blessed city of Sri Jagannatha, are vividly described, and it is shown how the teachings of Sri Ma were actually demonstrated in his own pilgrimage to Puri. The volume is particularly helpful for all who earnestly desire to attain devotion to the Lord through making pilgrimages.

Swami Jyotirupananda

NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA CHERRAPUNJEE

Report for 1971-74

In 1924, some monks of the Order, headed by the late Swami Prabhananda, began work on a modest scale at Shella, about 13 miles from Cherrapunjee. The work, particularly educational, spread through the Khasi Hill country, and by 1937, the Ashrama at Shillong was affiliated to the Ramakrishna Mission; eleven years later the Cherrapunjee centre, with the Shella and Nongwar schools, was made a separate branch. As a prominent hill station and centre of the Khasi culture, Cherrapunjee is well suited for this work. The Ashrama conducts the following activities:

At CHERRAPUNJEE: There is a small shrine and prayer room; weekly *bhajan* is conducted, in which a number of Khasis participate, with available songs composed in Khasi language by Swami Chandikananda. Daily prayers are held by the boys of the Students' Home; also weekly religious classes and *bhajan*, for these boys. Ramnam-singing is held fortnightly; Sunday classes are held in Khasi, on Khasi religion and culture; booklets in Khasi language, published locally, on Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, and Swamiji, are distributed free. Birthdays of great saints, especially Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, are celebrated, with enthusiastic public cooperation. A *High School*, started in 1931, is managed by a committee of which several members are Khasi; there are 29 qualified teachers; and the quality of work is such as to attract students from places as distant as Naga Hills, Manipur, and Assam. The curriculum is that prescribed by the board of Secondary Education, Meghalaya. The school has a fine library, with nearly 10,000 books; the Reading Room has many good papers and journals. The local students have great taste for music, which is stressed in extra-curricular activity, as are games and sports. There is a Junior Division Air Troop

N.C.C., last year training 73 cadets. In the Technical Section, for classes VII and VIII, weaving, tailoring, typewriting, carpentry, and bee-keeping are taught. The School receives notable financial help from the Government of Meghalaya; all tribal students are given full free concession. A *Students' Home*, under direct supervision of the workers of the Mission, serve, as boys' hostel for the High School. In the (Vivekananda Centenary) *Community Hall*, lectures, film-shows, and other educational functions are given.

At SHELLA SUB-CENTRE: Activities are conducted by local Khasi devotees, stressing regular service in the Shrine, religious classes, devotional songs, etc. Durga-puja is a prominent event, in which almost all the important functions are conducted by the local workers. A Middle English school, and a Nursery and Primary School are conducted, with total of 127 students. A free Reading Room and Library are maintained, and a spacious Community Hall, built in front of the Temple, with funds from Central and State Governments, is a notable centre for local gatherings.

At SOBHAR SUB-CENTRE: Eight miles from Cherrapunjee, this has developed under the able guidance of a local devotee, into an admirable institution with: (*a*) Middle English School, with technical section stressing weaving, embroidery and tailoring; (*b*) Junior Basic School; (*c*) Students' Home, for 20 boys, with modern amenities; (*d*) Girls' Hostel, for 20 girls, recently constructed with Government help. 67 boys and girls read in the schools; the Middle English School has produced uniformly excellent results.

Other PRIMARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOLS: Besides the above-noted Schools there are 9 Middle and 27 Primary Schools, scattered over the South Khasi Hills, managed by the Cherrapunjee centre. Altogether, 1051 boys and 1086 girls read presently in these schools. Results of M.S.L.C. and Primary Scholarship examinations have been uniformly good.

RELATED ACTIVITIES: To improve teaching-efficiency, the Mission conducts 'internal inspection' of all the schools under its care. Seminars are held annually at Cherrapunjee where all teachers of Primary and Middle schools are given intensive training-courses with the help of eminent educationists. For the students, many educational tours were organized, to increase their knowledge of the country and its culture. Besides several trips in Assam, etc., there were some to holy places in West Bengal, in U.P., and also to centres of civic interest.

A DAIRY FARM with 40 head of cattle, and Poultry Farm with 50 birds, are attached to the Cherrapunjee Centre. The Mission is in charge of organizing the BEE-KEEPING industry in South Khasi Hills, as sponsored and financed by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission. Through six Substations, hives are supplied to bee-keepers at nominal rates, to a total so far of 8,100 hives, and scientific methods are being disseminated.

RELIEF WORK: For East Bengal Evacuees, 1971-72 three camps dispensed clothes, blankets, medicines, grains, etc., to the extent of Rs. 62,964/-.

The GOLDEN JUBILEE Celebration of the Shella Ashrama is described in detail in the *Prabuddha Bharata* for July 1974.

Immediate Needs: (1) Reserve Fund (to bridge gaps in receipt of Government Grants, which often get unpredictably delayed): Rs. 3,00,000. (2) Shella Support Wall (from river): Rs. 50,000. (3) Walling, levelling, fencing, etc., at Cherrapunjee: Rs. 50,000. (4) Monks' Quarters: Rs. 50,000. (5) Medical Ward, Students' Home (Cherrapunjee): Rs. 50,000. (6) Improved Water Supply, Cherrapunjee: Rs. 25,000.

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION FLOOD RELIEF WORK

AN APPEAL

The public are aware of the unprecedented flood causing immense loss of life and property in Bihar. Patna city also bore the brunt of the havoc. Many areas of the city and suburbs are still under water. Various diseases due to the after-effects of the flood worsened the situation.

The Ramakrishna Mission started relief work in and around the Patna city since 27th August. At present, Atta, flattened rice, Chhatu, potato, salt, Match-box etc. and Dhoti and Sari are being given to 5,000 people of seven areas. Side by side, medical relief also is being given in the same areas. But the work must be extended to other areas also on a large scale to bring effective relief to the distressed people as far as possible, and we have made a beginning depending upon the generous help which we expect to receive from the public. We believe they will extend their helping hand to us in this humanitarian work, as they have done in the past.

All contributions for the purpose will be thankfully received at the following addresses. Cheques are to be drawn in favour of "Ramakrishna Mission".

THE LIST OF ADDRESSES

1. Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math 711-202, Howrah
2. Advaita Ashrama, 5 Dehi Entally Road, Calcutta 700-014
3. Udbodhan Office, 1 Udbodhan Lane, Calcutta 700-003
4. Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Calcutta 700-029
5. Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratishthan, 99 Sarat Bose Road, Calcutta 700-026
6. Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Ramakrishna Avenue, Patna 800-004
7. Ramakrishna Mission, Khar, Bombay 400-052
8. Ramakrishna Mission, Ramakrishna Ashrama Marg, New Delhi 110-055
9. Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 600-004

SWAMI GAMBHIRANANDA
General Secretary
RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

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